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General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Friday, 22 September 2017, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Address by Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Biya *(spoke in French)*: I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I am sure that your rich experience will serve us well in successfully steering our deliberations. You can count on the full cooperation of my delegation.

My congratulations also go to Ambassador Peter Thomson, your predecessor and the architect of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, on his commendable record.

Lastly, I would like, once again, to congratulate Mr. António Guterres on his unanimous election as Secretary-General of our Organization. He can count on the continuing support of Cameroon as he carries out his important and complex tasks.

This session is being held in a global context of multiple hotbeds of tension all over the world, in which terrorism continues to claim thousands of victims, human activity is causing climate disruptions and poverty is far from declining. But it is also taking place in parallel with laudable efforts aimed at implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is designed to ensure humankind's development in such a way that no one will be left behind. That explains the full relevance of this general debate under the theme "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet".

Our debates, especially our conclusions, will be a litmus test of our commitment to the ideals of the peoples of the United Nations, who, in the Preamble to the Charter, have stated their resolve to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to promote social progress and create better standards of living for all people. For Cameroon and most of our States, peace is the sine qua non for the survival of humankind and sustainable development. The peace we have continues to be dangerously threatened, notably by terrorism, conflicts, poverty and climate disruptions. Today we are all, I would say, supplicants for peace, and such persistent threats are of enormous concern to all of us.

Today, no continent or country is spared the scourge of terrorism, whose atrocities have, unfortunately, become part and parcel of our daily lives. Let me cite a few examples. In August 2017, attacks took place in Barcelona and Ouagadougou; in July 2016, a Baghdad bombing left 292 dead; in October 2015, the crash of a Russian Airbus in the Sinai left 224 dead; a March

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2015 attack on mosques in Sana'a left 142 dead; and in November 2015 attacks in Paris and Saint-Denis left 130 dead.

Maiduguri, Kolofata and Fotokol are place names that conjure up only dead, nameless and faceless bodies. The number of victims of the Boko Haram terrorist sect in the Lake Chad basin is estimated to be 2,000. Cameroon and other neighbouring countries have been dealing with that sect, which changes its methods and tactics daily, and we appreciate the support of our partners in the fight against such barbarism. The fight against Boko Haram, a jihadist sect, will need more widespread mobilization if we really want to stamp it out. It is killing our peoples, our communities, our independence and our democracy. It spells death for peace. In that regard, we look forward to the forthcoming visit to the Lake Chad region of the high-level mission led by the Secretary-General and mandated by the Security Council under resolution 2349 (2017).

We deplore the continuing conflicts in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, which are wreaking pain and hardship — so many dead, so many refugees and displaced persons, so many children wandering without a roof over their heads and facing uncertain, even shattered futures. Cameroon, which has hosted and continues to host thousands of Central African and Nigerian refugees, understands the degree to which they feel hurt, victimized and threatened in their very existence. Let us therefore mobilize, and through our policies, behaviours and actions, let us refocus on people.

Peace is under threat, not only from terrorism and conflicts, but also from persistent poverty. The Security Council has rightly reiterated that poverty is a serious threat. Why, then, do we have such difficulty tackling it accordingly? The numerous declarations and resolutions, the various United Nations development decades and the plans of action and other agendas adopted by the United Nations have not really been effective, and the result is clear. Poverty persists, and the gap between rich and poor countries is continues to widen. The situation has been aggravated by a decline in commodity prices.

Let us galvanize ourselves in a powerful surge of solidarity to roll back poverty. Let us match our words with our actions and thereby create the conditions for a decent life for our peoples. Let us therefore focus on people.

We must, for present and future generations, save our planet. We therefore welcome the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which Cameroon, I would like to point out, was among the first countries to sign and ratify. We are pleased that steps are being taken to implement it effectively. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the legitimate and unanimous desire of developing countries. As we all know, they pollute less and should therefore receive resources from the rich countries, which pollute more, to enable them to effectively promote the goals of the Paris Agreement at their level.

Africa has two major environmental challenges. The first is the ongoing forest degradation in Central Africa. Let us save the Congo basin, which is planet Earth's second lung. Secondly, there is desertification, which is causing Lake Chad to disappear. That vast body of water, essential to the survival of communities and biodiversity, has already lost 90 per cent of its former surface area. Let us save Lake Chad and thereby help to preserve the planet for the greater good of humankind.

The quest for peace concerns all of us. All countries must join forces to achieve peace. Is it not high time then for the voice of poor countries, especially those of Africa, to be heard? Is it not high time that Africa's message to the world was better taken into account? Is it not high time that we structured our Organization to give more weight to Africa's voice within a revitalized General Assembly and a Security Council that is more receptive and more even-handed to us? A world characterized by greater solidarity is the prerequisite for peace on Earth.

In conclusion, peace is our most precious asset. Without it, we cannot undertake sustainable and effective initiatives in the interest of our peoples, especially our young people. The theme of this debate aptly reminds us of the commitment of the founding fathers of the United Nations, that is, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and ensure a decent life for all, free from want, through cooperation. This debate urges us to renew our faith in the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Let us together take up the great challenge of world peace and development.

Once again, Cameroon, as it did from this very rostrum on 10 September 2000, urges the world to rally together in one great coalition for humankind, which

must restore to the centre of our policies. For its sake, let us secure peace and a decent life on a sustainable planet.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cameroon for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Maamau: I bring warm greetings from the Government and the people of the Republic of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am very honoured and humbled to address this gathering. In our traditional way and in the Lord's name, I share with the General Assembly blessings and peace. May all be blessed.

I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. You have an important responsibility to chart and lead the course of our work during this session, and I am confident that, under your able leadership, we will achieve the goals and targets set for this session based on the theme "Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". Please be assured of our full support and cooperation.

I join others in commending and acknowledging with gratitude and pride the marvellous leadership of your predecessor and our Pacific brother, His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji.

As this is our new Secretary-General's first general debate, I extend to him our heartfelt congratulations on his assumption of the leadership of our Organization, and acknowledge his unwavering commitment to reforming the United Nations in order to make it more inclusive and responsive to the contemporary global realities facing its Member States.

I congratulate you, Sir, on the theme you have chosen for this session. It serves as a reminder to us of two of the great wonders of creation: our people and our planet. They are giving rise, however, to great concern both for today and for tomorrow. People are the fundamental foundations of our families, our societies, our nations and our planet, bound together by strong human values and a strong faith in God. The theme reminds us of our important responsibility as leaders to ensure that human lives, human dignity and human values must prevail over dollar value. We must make sure we serve and deliver on our main objective as a global family to provide a peaceful and secure world without nuclear weapons and promote social progress, better living standards, human rights and dignity for all our citizens. We all want to live a happy life on a safe and sustainable planet.

As leaders of our sovereign nations we are responsible for our people, who are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Every year, we converge in this Hall from all corners of our planet to represent the voices of our people, to share their triumphs and tribulations and to share our visions for them and for our planet. The voices we represent at this gathering are constant and dominated by messages of trials and challenges with varying degrees of urgency and intensity.

In recent years we have continued to witness human suffering around the world as a result of armed conflicts, terrorism, persecution, corruption, climate change and natural disaster, to name but a few. Over the past few weeks we also have witnessed, through the media, heartbreaking news of the loss of lives and extensive devastation in the Caribbean, Mexico and the United States caused by the unprecedented and continued onslaught of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Jose and Maria, as well as an earthquake.

While they have not been as widely reported as the hurricanes and earthquakes in the Americas, the intense typhoons and monsoons in Asia have also caused great human suffering and loss. On behalf of the

people and Government of Kiribati, I offer our heartfelt condolences and prayers to all victims of those natural tragedies as they try to rebuild their lives after the loss of their loved ones and their homes.

We deal with human suffering in countries affected by rapid-onset disasters, but we must not forget the plight of those in countries such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, the Maldives and other small island developing States, who continue to suffer on a daily basis from the impact of the slow-onset climate disaster. It may not be capturing the attention of the global community, owing to its slow impact and to limited media attention, but it is causing great pain and suffering in our communities.

During this seventy-second session and in view of our theme, the United Nations should focus on the most vulnerable and underprivileged members of our global family, such as the least developed countries and small island developing States. We must provide them with special attention and support so that they can achieve self-sufficiency and enjoy decent and dignified lives. We must make sure they are not left behind in our global journey towards achieving the global development agenda. We must provide a platform on which they can participate meaningfully in international processes that affect their lives. We must make sure their voices are heard.

International processes and systems must be simplified and streamlined so as to enable enhanced participation and easy access to global resources like the Green Climate Fund. Above all else, human lives and dignity must be protected. We must celebrate and build on the diversity of our people, our rich cultures and values. We must respect each other and work together to overcome global challenges and unlock global potential.

Like others, Kiribati looks forward to a day when we will have a different story to tell to our children and our children's children — a story without heartbreaking human suffering and loss; a story of success and joy. That story must start with the major transformation of our homes, our societies, our nations and our world but, most importantly, with the immediate transformation of our hearts. That is the main source of our global problems.

My Government is embarking on an ambitious transformative 20-year vision for Kiribati towards becoming a wealthy, healthy and secure nation based on accelerated growth and strategic investment in our human, natural and cultural capital. Our priority sectors in the immediate term are fisheries and tourism, with an anticipated boost in our national income levels to help finance our development priorities. Our intervention is targeted at empowering our people at the household and community levels. They are the foundation on which our nation is based. The stronger the foundation, the more resilient and more self-sufficient our nation can be. My Government has put in place income-generation programmes to boost household income levels in order to address poverty and hardship in our society and provide an opportunity for a decent and dignified life for our people.

Our Government's policy is to serve and deliver to our people based on the principles of good governance and transparency. We have established a parliamentary select committee on anti-corruption. We have enacted a leadership code and put in place the necessary regulations and arrangements for the establishment of a leadership commission next year. Before I left Kiribati earlier this week, I launched our first-ever national anti-corruption strategy covering the public sector, the private sector and civil society. Nurturing and developing a decent life for all requires genuine and inclusive partnerships. We acknowledge existing partnerships and look forward to establishing new ones.

We cannot talk about focusing on people and creating a decent life for all if our United Nations family is incomplete or unbalanced. Every year, we pledge to consolidate and act together to provide a better life for our people, yet we choose to ignore the 23 million people in Taiwan and deprive them of the right to be part of this global family and to participate and contribute meaningfully to the sustainable development agenda. We call for a reform programme that will see Taiwan included in our global family's efforts and drive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our planet is struggling to keep up with our insatiable greed and demands. We are stretching our planet's capacity to dangerous limits. Continuing with unsustainable patterns of production and consumption will undoubtedly push our planet's life-support system to the brink of collapse. The warning signs of unprecedented natural events, bringing despair and havoc in their wake, should serve as confirmation of the poor health of our planet.

With lessons learned from the damage we have caused to our atmosphere, we must ensure that we act urgently and collectively to conserve our ocean so that we do not repeat the same mistake we made with our atmosphere. I am encouraged to note item 77 on the agenda of the General Assembly, which proposes, among other things, the formulation of an internationally legally binding instrument for the management and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

That is crucial for Kiribati and other countries that rely heavily on revenue from fisheries. A single management failure in any such fisheries area, or any other part of the ocean, could have devastating consequences, not just for the fisheries of a nearby exclusive economic zone but potentially for the fisheries of the entire ocean. Fishing revenue accounts for about 80 per cent of our current budget. I cannot emphasize enough the impact of such an issue on the ambitious vision by which, 20 years from now, Kiribati aspires to implement a self-reliance strategy to harvest, process and market its own tuna.

The ocean has a strong connection to the people and to peace and prosperity. Kiribati has played its part in the conservation and management of the ocean by declaring 11 per cent of its total exclusive economic zone as a marine protected area, a non-commercial zone and a world heritage entity under UNESCO, with the aim of enabling the re-stocking of fisheries resources for the future. We have also declared our entire exclusive economic zone a shark sanctuary. If a small, resource-constrained nation like mine is willing to make such a profound sacrifice, affecting its own economy and a resource for the entire world that its people rely on every day for a living, this global family certainly has a far greater capacity to do more and make sacrifices that focus on people, so that our children and their children can build a decent life in a sustainable environment.

In spite of all those challenges, we remain steadfast in our strong development aspirations and vision for our people. We need swift global action on climate change and we require support to mitigate and alleviate the suffering of our people. We are grateful for the support of all our development partners in our efforts to address the impact of climate change on our people in areas such as water and sanitation, coastal protection of our water resources, our critical public infrastructure and farmland.

Access to climate financing such as the Green Climate Fund takes too long to process and disburse. The longer the delay in delivering that much needed financing for urgent adaptation, the greater the cost to our people and environment. We simply cannot afford to wait any longer. As part of my Government's plan, Kiribati Vision 20, we have decided to take charge of our fate and put in place innovative financing modalities. That will enable us to fast-track financing support for our sustainable development agenda, especially in relation to climate change and disaster risk management.

With the approval of Parliament, my Government is leveraging our sovereign wealth fund as collateral for concessional debt financing. Ideally, the Government will be looking at concessional debt financing with an interest rate of 1 to 2 per cent, to be repaid when climate or adaptation financing is available. We are currently earning about a 6 per cent return on our investment. That is a move beyond traditional and conventional roles, but we would rather take the initiative to drive our own aspirations and deliver to our people, than wait for financial assistance that may come at a moment far too late. The fate of humankind and life must not be mortgaged to the bureaucratic processes of financial institutions.

In conclusion, as leaders of this global family, we have a moral responsibility to focus on the people we serve, strive for peace and a decent life for all and make sure the health of the planet is sustained so that it can continue to support life. In our quest for sustainable development, we often focus on the economic fundamentals at the expense of human values. For so long, our focus has been diverted from the very purpose of this global family to our individual fights and quest for power, dominance and greed. In the process, we fail to recognize that for some members of this global family, their priority is simply to survive and provide a decent life and future for their children.

The compassion and love that exist within all of us can easily transform our global challenges by focusing on the most vulnerable members of our global family. We contemplate how we can best find grand solutions, when all we really need is to translate the meaning of family into what it stands for — love, compassion, respect, understanding and kindness. Those are priceless solutions to the mounting problems that we continue to battle.

We come to this gathering to listen and converse, and let us do so with greater compassion, understanding, love, respect and kindness. As the saying goes, it is never too late to start. Lastly, I share with those present, all our heart, love and traditional blessing: *Te mauri, te raoi ao te tabomoa*, which means "health, peace and prosperity to us all". God bless all our people. God bless our United Nations leaders and our United Nations family and God bless our shared home, our planet.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Touadera (*spoke in French*): I should like to add my voice to those that have preceded me at this rostrum in order to extend to you, Mr. President, my warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We wish you every success in fulfilling your noble task.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his tremendous work and outstanding achievements during his tenure. And I commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his actions since his arrival at the head of our shared Organization.

The General Assembly is meeting for its seventy-second session at a time when our planet is facing numerous challenges, including the problem of international terrorism, that must be urgently addressed. Insecurity has taken root everywhere. Whether in the Middle East, Africa or Europe, international security is constantly under threat from terrorist groups of every stripe. That is why I am appealing solemnly to the entire international community to redouble its efforts and pool its resources in order to eradicate this scourge.

Regarding migration, North Africa is in turmoil as it sees so many victims abandoned in the desert or disappearing at sea. The route across the Mediterranean frequently ends in disaster and continues to be a major challenge that we must tackle. Moreover, the problem of refugees has worsened in recent years and is now so serious that it is a priority concern of the international community that demands special attention.

Concerning climate change and sustainable development, our planet continues to suffer the effects of natural phenomena such as earthquakes, floods, drought, rapid desertification and global warming, which are real worries. To that end, I would remind us all, as signatories to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, that we should honour the commitments made at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change regarding the importance of pooling our efforts in order to preserve our shared environment.

With regard to United Nations reform, the Central African Republic, as a member of the African Union (AU), supports the common position of AU member States, as adopted by the Group of Eleven Forum in Malabo, on the need to enlarge the Security Council to include Africa.

Other global issues are the respect for human rights, the rule of law and good governance, which are indispensable prerequisites for social welfare. I pledge that the Central African Republic will continue to make its modest contribution to our joint efforts for peace, security and sustainable development, to which we all aspire.

I welcome the choice of theme for the present session, entitled "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", an appropriate reflection of the importance of humankind's place in our Organization's agenda and in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted here in 2015 with the aim of reducing poverty by half by 2030.

Today, as part of its national reconstruction policy, the Central African Republic's peacebuilding and recovery programme puts its citizens, as human beings, at the heart of its priorities. With the support of our technical and financial partners, the programme has enabled the Government to establish an appropriate institutional framework for the conduct, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs, with particular emphasis on the objectives that have been identified as priorities.

Since this meeting of the Assembly offers me an opportunity to speak about the situation of the Central African Republic, let me say a few words about that. At the Brussels donor conference in November 2016, I mentioned the dream I share with my fellow countrymen of rebuilding a State that can come to terms with itself as a diverse and reconciled nation in a state of calm. Our plea led, as I have indicated, to an unprecedented display of international solidarity with the Central African Republic aimed at ensuring the implementation of the Central African peacebuilding and recovery programme.

In order to follow up on the plan's implementation, we have reached an agreement that will serve as a new framework for mutual commitment between the Central African Republic and the international community. It is in that spirit of continuing consultation with partners that on Tuesday, 19 September, here in New York, I presented an account of the progress we have made in implementing our commitments to attaining the Central African peacebuilding and recovery programme.

To touch on some aspects of the programme, with regard to our commitment to peace and security, the Government of the Central African Republic has combined its resources in order to consolidate the process for the cessation of all hostilities in the country. Through hard work, we have been able to secure the active and permanent participation of the 14 armed groups involved in the work of our consultative follow-up committee on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) in the national DDRR programme, and the committee held its seventh session on 3 and 4 August.

In our determined quest for peace, we accepted the assistance of the Community of Sant'Egidio, which led to the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace in the Central African Republic on 19 June. On that occasion all the armed groups had to reaffirm their commitment to the integrity of our national territory, to our shared values and to the constitutional principles of the Republic. Despite that significant progress, we deplore certain armed groups' violations of their commitment to an immediate cessation of hostilities throughout the country, and my Government categorically condemns the senseless violence that continues to darken the lives of innocent civilians.

In order to galvanize the peace process into reaching its full potential, strengthen the coherence of our approach and unite the support of our friends, we have worked to harmonize all the peace efforts in the Central African Republic, resulting in the adoption of a road map for peace and national reconciliation in the Central African Republic in Libreville on 17 July. We welcome that major progress, which marks the unwavering commitment of our neighbours and of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to the success of our untiring quest for peace.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the very promising outcome of the first meeting of the facilitation panel of the African Initiative in Bangui on 11 September. Here, before the Assembly, I reaffirm my commitment to the African Initiative, as well as to ensuring its full success for the benefit of my fellow citizens, in line with the expectations we share with the friendly countries and organizations that are supporting us. At this stage, it is the sole framework uniting all efforts aimed at achieving peace and reconciliation under the determined leadership of the Central African Government.

Within the context of the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration programme, the work of the advisory and monitoring committee continues, and the programme has gained steam with the pilot project that I launched on 30 August. Its first phase involves 40 ex-combatants from each of 13 of the 14 armed groups. We are making every effort to ensure that the pilot programme's success becomes a monument to our true commitment to peace, because our faith in peace is unshakable.

At the same time, we are working to rebuild a national, representative, professional and republican army within a framework of security-sector reform, informed by a national security policy based on a political consensus that takes threats to security into account, and on the republican values and principles

that must guide the State in its sovereign mission to ensure security for all. In that spirit, the support offered by the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic has enabled us to form two battalions ready for deployment, and friendly and brotherly countries have made a concrete demonstration of their solidarity by training Central African components in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. In order to address the need to strengthen internal security, 500 police and gendarmes have been recruited with the help of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

In the areas of justice and human rights, our efforts have focused on operationalizing the Special Criminal Court and training prison guards, as well as on improving our judicial and penitentiary infrastructure. My Government attaches great importance to national reconciliation, but that cannot be achieved without justice, which must address the many claims of victims.

The Administration's redeployment in the prefectures is also one of our biggest and most urgent priorities, and its implementation has had support from the international community. I welcome the redeployment of civil servants in the various districts of the country, as well as the considerable resources that have already been invested in restoring public infrastructure. With the continued support of our friends and through the United Nations, the Government has initiated the Bambari pilot project, aimed at signalling the restoration of State authority. With that new momentum in redeploying the Administration throughout the territory, we are proceeding in stages so as to ensure that the approach is as inclusive as possible.

Regarding financial governance, the Government's work is yielding encouraging results, which must be pursued more vigorously, given that the country has yet to emerge fully from the acute crisis that tore it apart. Since the agreement signed with the International Monetary Fund in June 2016, several measures have been implemented to increase the State's financial performance. The strengthening of public financial management mechanisms has been reflected in the adoption of measures to rationalize parafiscal measures and increase transparency so as better to cope with revenue shortfalls. The outcome of the second review under the extended credit-facility management issued by the International Monetary Fund in July confirms that we have definitely embarked on a path of good financial governance.

Economic recovery is another area that we are giving undivided attention. The protracted crisis had a disastrous impact on production and has led to high poverty rates. The lack of economic opportunities and prospects have led some of my fellow citizens to join those resorting to violence. The reconstruction of the Central African Republic will continue to elude us as long as production continues to be unpredictable, unregimented and completely unregulated by the authorities. Among other measures, my Government is meanwhile committed to building up its DDRR programme so that all the energy that was previously channelled into negative activity can be reinvested more profitably in the service of the nation and for community recovery. In that regard, the primary sector, agriculture and livestock are central to our efforts.

The exploitation of natural resources, a sector in urgent need of attention, must be entirely controlled by the State. While we all know that the Central African Republic is overflowing with immense resources, they will continue to be empty words if we cannot harness those resources for a positive impact on the daily life of every one of my fellow citizens.

Despite all these efforts and the progress that has been made, we must not ignore the humanitarian situation, which has seriously deteriorated in several parts of the country in the wake of a resurgence of violence, whose real motive continues is still a rapacious and fierce competition for the illegal control and exploitation of the riches that lie beneath and on the surface of the soil of the Central African Republic.

Some 2.4 million people are estimated to be in need of emergency humanitarian assistance. We are dealing with 600,000 internally displaced persons who must be supported and helped so that they can return to their homes and lead productive lives. On top of that, we estimate that 500,000 of our citizens are currently refugees living primarily in neighbouring countries, and we must make every effort to repatriate them. The humanitarian crisis we are experiencing only compounds the complexity of the political situation, and we must work to remedy it.

With regard to future action, I would like to share with the Assembly our main areas of focus within the mutual engagement framework. On the issue of peace and security, I want to concentrate all our efforts on

ensuring that we will have taken significant steps in terms of dialogue with armed groups and the implementation of the national DDRR programme by the end of this year, and I am firmly committed to that.

Nevertheless, although the dialogue in this area is under way, it is a fact that the State must continue to function and especially to ensure the safety of all citizens. In order for the Forces armées centrafricaines and the interior security forces to undertake their redeployment efforts, they must be able to take action. On behalf of the people of the Central African Republic, I therefore solemnly call on the Security Council, as the political organ of the United Nations tasked with ensuring world peace, to deploy the means at its disposal, including relaxing the conditions governing the equipping of our republican defence and security forces so that they can contribute to the rapid restoration of peace and security in the Central African Republic and enable us to consolidate the democratic achievements made thus far.

With respect to political, administrative and financial governance, we are going to strengthen our dialogue with all national actors and provide political support for the implementation of the road map for peace and reconciliation in our country. Our most ardent wish is to be able to conclude that dialogue in 2017, so that the new year will have genuine prospects for peace. In that regard I call on the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to act swiftly and accelerate the deliberations of the facilitation panel. I will also commit to working in the area of justice and reconciliation. The preparations for the implementation of the transitional justice mechanism should enable us to make 2018 a year dedicated to the immense task of giving our citizens the opportunity to talk to one another in a candid way, help the truth emerge and decide to move forward towards a brighter future.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In brief, that is our situation. That is the work that we are doing constantly to achieve peace, reconciliation and the reconstruction of the Central African Republic. I am fully committed to the success of efforts to bring about peace. However, Member States are undoubtedly aware of the Central African Republic's limited capacity. Today, on top of our own weaknesses, we are worried about the fact that even MINUSCA's staff is inadequate to the challenge of protecting our civilians. The heightened security threats linked to violence from armed groups mean that more must be done to ensure that the crisis does not spread. As I plead for the easement of the equipment restrictions on our army, I now also call on the international community to increase MINUSCA's military component, given the huge territory that it has to cover. I also ask that its mandate, which will expire very soon, be reviewed and strengthened, so as to help the legitimate Government regain control of those areas that have natural resources sought after by various groups beyond Government control.

I would like to express the gratitude of the Central African people to the brotherly countries that have sent peacekeepers to my country. I pay tribute to the memory of those who have perished in carrying out their noble and dangerous mission of peace. I wish every success for our deliberations and am grateful for the opportunity to speak about my country, the Central African Republic.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Central African Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Filip (Republic of Moldova) (*spoke in Romanian; English text provided by the delegation*):

At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to wish him success in fulfilling his important mandate.

My thanks also go to his predecessor Mr. Peter Thomson, for his dedication and professionalism in conducting the work of the previous session.

I take this opportunity to express words of encouragement and support to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. I am confident that with his competent leadership and the joint efforts of the Member States, we will succeed in redefining the role of the United Nations and adjusting it to the requirements of the modern world.

Clearly, all of us gathered in this great Hall are deeply concerned about the challenges confronting the international community. The armed conflicts in the Middle East, protracted disputes, terrorism and violent extremism, and the affliction caused by poverty are only some of the problems undermining peace and sustainable development. We are equally concerned about the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons and the development of nuclear programmes. An international environment marked by threats to use force, including nuclear arms, greatly exacerbates people's sense of insecurity and lack of trust.

The devastating natural disasters occurring with increasing frequency in a warming world affect hundreds of millions of people, especially those living in extreme poverty. In that context, I would like to express our compassion and deep condolences to the countries and the families affected by the recent devastating hurricanes, as well as by the earthquake in Mexico.

The statements by previous speakers show that we all have similar perceptions of global problems. Today more than ever, we need the joint commitment of all States Members of the United Nations to face those challenges. In that context, I would like to reiterate my country's full support for Secretary-General Guterres's reform agenda, which puts renewed emphasis on conflict prevention, the repositioning of the development system and reform of the internal management of the United Nations in order to effectively address the world's major challenges.

Since signing the European Union Association Agreement in June 2014, my country has engaged in a complex process of structural reforms aimed at building a modern society based on the European development model. Our efforts have concentrated on steadily consolidating the rule of law and developing a functioning market economy, as well emphasizing a prominent social dimension and respect for human rights.

The strategic priorities for sectoral development include, first of all, modernizing infrastructure, managing resources efficiently, promoting a green economy and renewable energy and applying modern technologies in agriculture. We have also undertaken to reform the public administration and the public services, while ensuring gender equality and the promotion of youth. We have the political will needed to fully implement those reforms, and in that endeavour we will continue to rely on the support of our development partners, particularly the European Union and the United Nations.

The Republic of Moldova fully shares the view that the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts, in particular protracted ones, are indispensable conditions for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Considering the current lack of progress in settling protracted conflicts, there should be more direct involvement on the part of the appropriate United Nations bodies. We believe that no conflict in the world should be ignored by the United Nations, irrespective of whether it is on the Security Council's agenda or not.

We appreciate the fact that the General Assembly has agreed to include and maintain on its agenda the item entitled "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development". Contrary to the fears of some, the General Assembly's deliberations on that item do not undermine the existing mechanisms for negotiating the settlement of conflicts in the area of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, made up of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova (GUAM). On the contrary, it is the continued monitoring of the situation in the area, together with a proactive approach by the United Nations when its involvement is needed, that can prevent or counter attempts aimed at changing the political borders of some GUAM States through methods that have nothing to do with democracy and international law.

I take this opportunity to express the Republic of Moldova's deep concern about the ongoing armed

conflict in eastern Ukraine, which endangers peace and security in our region, and to once again reiterate our full support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integritye.

Since 1992, we have repeatedly referred from this rostrum to the unresolved conflict in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova, which is also complicated by the illegal stationing of foreign military forces on our national territory. We have underlined that, unlike other, similar conflicts in the post-Soviet space, the Transnistrian conflict, while less intricate, could be resolved more easily if all the parties concerned displayed the necessary political will. In our case, there is no ethnic or religious enmity, and the populations on both banks of the Nistru River could live in peace and mutual understanding within a reintegrated Moldovan State.

Despite our efforts over the past 25 years, including the involvement of international actors, we have not succeeded in settling this political conflict. We will continue to work to come up with a solution in the existing 5+2 settlement format. For us, it is extremely important that the solution be based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, while providing a special status for the Transnistrian region, as stipulated in the relevant documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

We firmly believe that the settlement process could be based on the transformation of the current trilateral peacekeeping force, which also includes a Russian contingent, into a multinational civilian mission with an international mandate. In that regard, I would like to emphasize that the trilateral disengagement force established in accordance with the Moldovan-Russian ceasefire agreement of 21 July 1992 fulfilled its remit long ago. That obsolete mechanism has become a factor in preserving the conflict and has failed to ensure the full demilitarization of the security zone and eliminate obstacles to the free movement of people, goods and services.

Contrary to our expectations, the Russian Federation has not yet withdrawn its military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with its international commitments as stipulated in the Moldovan-Russian ceasefire agreement of July 1992, the Moldovan-Russian agreement of October 1994 and in the relevant OSCE documents, in particular the political declaration adopted at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999.

I would like to make it clear that those military forces are distinct and should not be confused with the Russian contingent that participates in the trilateral peacekeeping force, which is operating on the basis of an ad hoc arrangement. The military exercises conducted regularly in the Transnistrian region by Russian troops, with the increased participation of paramilitary forces belonging to the separatist regime in Tiraspol, pose a continuing security threat to the Republic of Moldova. The joint military drills are in flagrant violation of express obligations stipulated in the Moldovan-Russian ceasefire agreement of 1992.

According to OSCE reports, the Operative Group of Russian Troops has stockpiled more than 21,000 metric tons of weapons and ammunition. The Government of the Republic of Moldova neither controls nor supervises those weapons and munitions. Due to the complete lack of access to those foreign-controlled stockpiles — some of which may pose substantial environmental danger — the munitions' technical condition cannot be assessed and transfers of them within that territory or outside it cannot be monitored.

For the same reasons, the Republic of Moldova is unable to fulfil its international obligations as a State party under various international disarmament conventions. Although they are located on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, those weapons and munitions are not under its jurisdiction or control. Taking into account the commitments of the Russian Federation, the fundamental principles of international law and the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova regarding its permanently neutral status and its non-admission of the deployment of other States' military troops on its national territory, we firmly reiterate our request for the complete and unconditional withdrawal of the so-called Operative Group of Russian Troops, a successor to the former fourteenth Soviet army, which is illegally stationed on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. In that context, I should also invoke the declaration on 21 July by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova that calls on the Russian Federation to resume and finalize the process of withdrawing its troops and munitions from the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

Mindful that the United Nations has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and

security, the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with Article 11 of the Charter of the United Nations, requests the inclusion on the agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly of a new item entitled "Withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova." In that regard, I respectfully call on all States Members of the United Nations to support that legitimate request, which is fully compliant with the principles of the Charter and represents the fundamental interests of the Republic of Moldova. We hope that the inclusion of that item on the General Assembly's agenda and its further consideration by Member States in a constructive and non-politicized manner, will constitute an important and necessary exercise in preventive diplomacy, in a country and a region where the maintenance of peace and security is persistently undermined by a lack of dialogue based on mutual respect and respect for the fundamental principles of international law.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to express our support to the victims of the recent hurricanes as well as those of the earthquakes in Mexico. Such natural disasters brutally destroy lives and dreams and bring about instability and insecurity. Above all, however, such tragedies are akin to a warning shot. They remind us of the utter urgency of the need to work together against global warming. In that regard, I would like to welcome and support the initiative undertaken by French President Emmanuel Macron in the wake of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change aimed at establishing a genuine and far-reaching compact for the environment.

Unquestionably, we can no longer postpone what we need to do today. For many countries, in particular the island States in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, such natural phenomena have an immediate impact on their survival. We must bequeath our children a planet where they can live and breathe, enriched by biological diversity. Let us use the best of our intelligence and our ability to innovate in order to rise to that existential challenge.

We all want a better world. We want to fight relentlessly against all forms of injustice, inequality and discrimination, whether on the basis of skin colour, religion, gender, culture of sexual orientation. And we all want to advance universal fundamental freedoms. When we want the best for our countries and for our fellow citizens, there can be no question of the importance of the freedom of the press and of expression. All too often, elections are manipulated, justice is undermined, corruption is widespread and there is a purposeful lack of transparency. Both national and international institutions must guarantee personal freedoms and work constantly to achieve emancipation and greater dignity for all. Of course, sovereignty must be fully respected, but it cannot be used as a shield or an excuse for attempting to legitimize atrocities or force submission.

This is not a lecture on morals or about dictating, by will or force, a ready-made model democracy. This is about convincing others, through steady and constant dialogue, of the need to unreservedly defend our universal values on behalf of each and every human being, no matter where they are from or where they are going. Diplomatic ruptures have never helped to advance universal values, and abandoning dialogue is often an act of cowardice that also abandons those fighting for greater freedom in their country.

We all want a safer world. Peace, security and stability are the best ways to guarantee that we can all live our lives to the full, having enough to eat, having work, having a home and being able to send our children to school. Yet still today there are too many conflicts, wars and hatred tearing hopes and dreams apart.

No continent is spared the scourge of terrorism. Fomenting hatred and spreading the poison of division is the grim goal of terrorists, whose senseless, barbaric

acts of murder destroy families' futures. None of us can remain indifferent to that, and my country is therefore participating, with others, in the Global Coalition against Da'esh. Military forces on the ground have forced Da'esh to retreat in Iraq and Syria, and we are committed to supporting the countries that have been destroyed in their efforts to rebuild.

But we must always continue the fight to protect our universal values of freedom, tolerance, respect and non-discrimination. Our desire to live together in harmony despite our differences and with respect for each other's cultures and customs must prevail. In that regard, I would like to recall the wise and ever-pertinent words of Gandhi, who said that if we answer hatred with hatred, we only spread it.

Another threat to world security is the uncontrolled proliferation of arms, particularly nuclear weapons. While the world is in turmoil and there are numerous conflict zones, the most lasting and mutually beneficial solutions will always be political and diplomatic in nature rather than military. The agreement concluded after several years of intense negotiations with Iran on the nuclear issue must be safeguarded and implemented. My country has many major differences with Iran but the agreement is nonetheless a channel for dialogue aimed at reducing tensions and threats. It is an opportunity to agree on our goals and deal with our differences peacefully. Rejecting it without proposing any alternative seems neither wise nor desirable.

The situation in North Korea is also enlightening on this issue. In contrast to the situation with Iran, here there was no continuous process of dialogue and negotiation. The result has been a dangerous escalation that is jeopardizing peace and security. We condemn the country's autocratic and provocative regime, but merely condemning it is not enough. We should all mobilize in order to prepare the ground for dialogue, including invoking the responsibility borne by such actors as China and Russia.

Economic development must serve social cohesion. Growth rates, even in double figures, are not necessarily a guarantee of the fair and equitable distribution of wealth. Capitalism is a means, nothing more or less, for serving social and economic development. We support free trade and we want an open global economy. The free flow of goods, services and knowledge should promote shared development and progress. Sustainable development is not possible without development, and we cannot eradicate poverty without increasing prosperity. Free enterprise must be geared to the true economy, the production of good and services and job creation. We must strengthen the middle classes everywhere. This is not about the survival of the fittest or having the law of jungle imposed on us. It is about distinguishing between investment and speculation. Investment, as opposed to financial speculation, is a responsible and virtuous activity that benefits society as a whole and stimulates innovation and progress.

Throughout history, freedom of movement and free trade have brought people closer together. Those principles have been at the heart of the European project for 60 years. The European Union negotiates treaties with various partners all over the world, including Canada and Japan. Those treaties include social and environmental provisions. That openness to the world, accompanied by rules and regulations, is the most concrete response we can make to isolationism and protectionism. History has shown us, time and again, that barriers and walls between peoples are illusory — they always give way to our natural thirst for freedom, openness and innovation.

The 2030 Agenda defines an ambitious framework for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by promoting private initiative, strengthening the rule of law, encouraging education for boys and girls alike, developing agriculture and building on good governance. Those actions constitute the best recipe for preventing conflict and creating a better, fairer and stronger world.

Countries in the South as well as the North are all concerned with the issue of migration. Belgium is a land that welcomes people seeking asylum and fleeing wars and persecution. And we will fight the faithless and lawless traffickers who put women and children in makeshift boats to embark on a journey towards an all too often tragic outcome. We must be on the side of those who suffer. Development in the countries of origin is the key. We must invest in the least developed countries. We remain firmly committed to concluding a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration by 2018. We advocate for a comprehensive approach that facilitates legal migration and enables people to return to their countries of origin, while ensuring their individual security.

Multilateralism is a robust and reliable engine for building a better world. Coordination and consensus-

building are required. However, the essence of the United Nations is sometimes called into question. Globalization generates doubts and fears. Yet multilateralism does not cause such disruptions; on the contrary, it is frequently the best solution to them.

We must respect our independence, but at the same time we must also recognize our interdependence and uphold the virtues of concerted action. We must work tirelessly to build a consensus in which all nations, large and small, have their roles to play and, in that way, have a say. Belgium is fully behind the Secretary-General's vision for reforming the Organization, not because reform is an end in itself, but because the world today demands more determined and results-oriented action.

Multilateralism is a complex task, with occasional obstacles and frequent frustrations. However, there are also successes of which we speak too little. In Colombia, for example, concerted action has put an end to one of the longest conflicts in the world. Multilateralism also requires a comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable approach. Prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding must be seen as part of a continuum. International and regional consultation must also be strengthened. As we know, when regional actors and the United Nations are aligned and working together in the same direction, great things can happen.

In the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, the countries of the region have a decisive role to play. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the security situation has deteriorated considerably and the humanitarian crisis is worrying. But even as the debate on the cost of peacekeeping operations has begun, we cannot abandon the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On the contrary, we must support it so that it can anchor itself in an irreversible democratic process, including by holding honest, transparent and inclusive elections. The destinies of Africa and Europe have always been linked. Challenges to one are challenges to the other, whether we are talking about security, migration or even development. We must work to achieve a less complicated relationship, liberated from the demons of the past and functioning on a peer-to-peer level, while we look to the future.

In the Middle East, we continue to advocate for a two-State solution for Israel and Palestine. As far as Syria is concerned, that endless conflict can end only when the international community as a whole shows its political will and develops a genuine common strategy.

Combating impunity and strengthening international justice are at the heart of Belgium's priorities, and we will continue to work for them An example of such efforts is the amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We want to encourage cooperation among States in order to combat impunity for the most serious international crimes. In that regard, we call on all States that have not yet done so to support an initiative to launch the negotiation of a new treaty on mutual assistance and extradition.

Our shared goal for the United Nations must be working every day to build an efficient Organization that serves the common interests of the Member States. The key to success lies in the art of compromise and the ability listen actively — and in having the strength of conviction to bring that about. My country's transparent and constructive attitude is reaping results that benefit everyone. Belgium is a land of compromise. It is in that spirit that we are currently a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. Based on our international roots and experience, we are ready to assume the responsibilities of building consensus and acting for peace. As the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau said, man can make his happiness only by working for that of others. We stand ready to get to work.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Lyonchoen Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Lyonchoen Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Lyonchoen Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Tobgay (Bhutan): I bring warm greetings from His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo.

Today my thoughts are with the people of Mexico, who suffered two terrible earthquakes this month. My thoughts are also with the victims of the other natural disasters that have recently brought pain and misery to people around the world — the three hurricanes that battered communities in the Caribbean and the United States and the devastating floods in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka that have taken more than 1,200 lives. Please join me in observing a moment of silence to reflect on the suffering of those communities and to offer our prayers for their recovery.

The disasters I just referred to are not isolated incidents. Experts are increasingly convinced that natural disasters like hurricanes and floods are made worse by climate change. Climate change is a reality. Each of the past three years has been the hottest in recorded history, and 16 of the 17 hottest years on record have all occurred in this new century. That must alarm us, for we are only in 2017. There is no room for complacency, hesitation or finger-pointing, excuses or procrastination. The urgency is now. Our well-being is at stake. The survival of future generations is at risk. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change is proof that we have accepted that climate change is a reality, and that we are willing to come together, to work together and to fight climate change together. I urge all countries to fulfil the promises they made in Paris.

As a landlocked, mountainous country, we are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. That is why we are particularly alarmed about unchecked environmental degradation, which is the root cause of climate change. We are already experiencing flash floods, glacial lake outbursts and severe and erratic weather patterns, whose effects can be particularly devastating for a poor country.

But we will not give up. We will take action. We have ratified the Paris Agreement and are well on our way to fulfilling our pledges. A total of 72 per cent of our country is under forest cover, and more than half of it is protected as national parkland, wildlife sanctuaries or nature reserves. That means that we are the world's only carbon-neutral country. In fact, we are a carbon-negative country. In addition, we generate and export clean renewable energy and invest in green industries and organic farming practices.

After centuries of neglect, fighting climate change is complex and expensive. That is why it is critical to ensure that all countries fulfil their respective commitments. But that takes money; hence the importance of climate financing mechanisms. However, securing financing is one of the biggest challenges that smaller nations have, and the role of climate-financing institutions is therefore essential. We applaud the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) for financing more than 4,000 environmental projects in 170 countries since its establishment in the 1990s. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) has also begun to help developing countries around the world respond to climate change through innovative and transformative interventions. Those institutions are critical for those who have the will but may not have the resources to take action. I applaud the innovative strategies and interventions that they have supported.

For our part, in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund we have launched Bhutan for Life, an innovative financing mechanism that will help safeguard our rich biodiversity until our Government can assume the full cost of its protection.

Now is the time to scale up our support to the GEF and GCF. That will enable all countries to fight climate change on a war footing and help developing countries respond to its effects. I am optimistic that we will be able to prevent the worst effects of climate change. But for that we have to work together. While the threat of natural disasters will always remain, we can and must ensure that they are not directly linked to human-induced activity.

The World Bank estimates that more than 800 million people live in poverty. For them, hunger, malnourishment and deprivation are everyday realities. And that reality — the scourge of poverty — silently kills countless millions every year. I ask members to please join me in observing a moment of silence for the millions of people around the world, particularly children, who are suffering or dying from poverty and malnourishment.

Poverty has no place in this day and age. After all, this era — our era — is blessed with unprecedented wealth, knowledge and technology, giving rise to levels of prosperity the world has never seen before. Yet millions are still condemned to a life of poverty. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are critical in that regard. They give us reason for hope. While every one of the 17 Goals will contribute to eradicating the scourge of poverty, our common resolve is articulated powerfully in the very first Goal of the SDGs, which

promises nothing less than to end poverty everywhere and in all its forms.

Eradicating poverty, like dealing with climate change, is complex and expensive. But according to one estimate, it would take only $175 billion per year to end extreme poverty. That should come as good news, since it is barely 0.32 per cent of the current global gross domestic product. We no doubt have a lot of work to do, but the SDGs provide a realistic road map for this important task. However, there are no easy shortcuts.

In that connection, the Secretary-General's reform initiatives will ensure that the United Nations is fit for purpose and able to respond to the call for transformation in order to bring about shared prosperity for all peoples of the world. I thank him for initiating such bold measures, and call on all Member States to give full support to the important reforms.

We in Bhutan are blessed. Our enlightened monarchs have carefully balanced economic growth with social development, environmental sustainability and cultural preservation, all within a framework of good governance. We call this holistic approach to development Gross National Happiness, a unique philosophy that guarantees all of our citizens free education and free health care, while providing additional targeted interventions for the poor.

I am happy to report that our efforts are bearing fruit. Multidimensional poverty has already fallen by half, and we are well on our way to reducing it still further, to 5 per cent within the next few years. Our success in reducing poverty is a tribute to the leadership of our kings and the spirit of the people of Bhutan.

It is also due to the support of the United Nations and our other development partners, particularly India, Japan, the European Union, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. Their continued support, partnership and generosity have helped us reduce poverty, achieve social growth and prepare for imminent graduation from the least-developed-country category.

I now ask everyone to join me in observing a moment of silence to remember the victims of global terrorism.

Recent acts of terrorism have brought pain and suffering to countless people in nearly every part of the world, and far too many lives have been cruelly lost. The horrific acts committed by terrorist groups undermine global peace and security, and Bhutan joins the call for united action to combat those extremists. To win the fight against terrorism, we have no option but to strengthen the United Nations so that multilateralism and global cooperation are further enhanced.

Two years ago, I joined many others in calling for United Nations reform (see A/70/PV.26). The Secretary-General's reform initiatives will provide a much-needed framework for revitalizing and strengthening the United Nations. Bhutan joins all Member States in backing that bold endeavour.

But any United Nations reform would be incomplete without reforming the Security Council to reflect the changing realities of today's world. In that regard, countries like India, Japan, Brazil and Germany must be called on to serve as permanent members in the Security Council, and Africa must also be appropriately represented.

We recognize that global peace and security are a shared concern and responsibility. As a peaceful country, one that has enjoyed the benefits of United Nations membership for more than four decades, we feel it is now time for us to contribute to global peace and security, if only modestly. Accordingly, it was with a sense of pride and duty in 2014 that Bhutan joined the peacekeeping movement. Since then, we have gradually increased our peacekeeping engagement in keeping with our duty to contribute, albeit in a small way, to the cause of global peace and security. In doing so our peacekeepers have and always will uphold the highest standards of integrity, ethics and professionalism while discharging their important responsibilities. Our military and police officers today serve in 11 peacekeeping missions, and the first-ever military contingent from Bhutan is now ready to be deployed to a peacekeeping mission.

However, the bedrock of global peace and security ultimately lies within each and every one of our individual countries. Every country must therefore protect the rights of its citizens, strengthen participatory democracy and participatory Government and enable economic opportunity for all. Those are the very principles of democracy and freedom. They must be nurtured and strengthened.

Nine years ago, Bhutan embarked on the path of democracy. In an unprecedented move in human history, our King, at the height of his popularity, imposed democracy, against the will of his people. After a century of peace and prosperity under enlightened monarchs, there was much apprehension and fear. But

nine years on, it gives me great satisfaction to report that democracy in Bhutan is well entrenched and irreversible. Today all the institutions of democratic governance have been established and are functioning well, along with a growing body of civil society and a strong and vibrant media. We held successful elections in 2008 and 2013, and look forward to a third election next year, in 2018.

The importance of the United Nations has never been greater, and the imperative for multilateralism has never been stronger. As we look to the future, Bhutan will continue working with all Member States to ensure that the United Nations continues to play an instrumental role in fighting climate change, eradicating poverty and maintaining global peace and security. In that regard, I have the honour to conclude with a quotation from our beloved King, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck:

> "No nation today can stand alone in achievement. Time is slowly telling us that there can be no lasting individual success without success as a community, and there cannot be lasting national progress and success if it does not fit into a future of global peace, harmony and equality. The world must progress together or fail together."

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lyoncheon Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rama (Albania): How many times has it happened that humankind has been confronted with as many complex challenges in such a relatively short time as is the case nowadays? Has there ever been another period in what we call modern times when we have had to deal with so many pressing issues at once? When was the last time we remember that we were all confronted with such a conflicting prospect — on the one hand, of an inspiring world that grows richer by the hour, driven by the tremendous progress of science and technology, and on the other of a planet that seems to have lost its way, its energy and its vision and to be spiralling erratically downwards?

There are no simple answers to complex questions. Yet facts are stubborn, and in many respects reality looks grim. Global terrorism and extremism continue to threaten our values and our way of life. They have become a persistent threat, with the ability to strike everywhere, indiscriminately and with far-reaching consequences, as we have sadly witnessed so many times, including in the recent past. Several brutal and seemingly intractable conflicts continue to devastate the lives of millions of people, thereby threatening the future of entire generations. Armed conflicts are nowadays more complex, the actors involved more numerous, the weapons and tactics more sophisticated and the consequences, which continue to inflict endless human suffering, more dire. The approximately 65 million people, the highest number since the Second World War, who have been forcefully and brutally uprooted from their homes constitute an indictment of our collective failure.

Climate change, a defiant truth that some still dare to question, is putting our very survival at risk. It constitutes one the most fundamental challenges for our century, as it continues to cause growing humanitarian stress. Disasters are becoming more frequent and intense, and one example, the current hurricane season in the Atlantic, reminds us that nature will always have the upper hand unless we become aware of the need to quickly adapt our way of life and protect our planet, our lives and those of our children.

The international global order has been seriously challenged without anything credible or promising to replace it. Worse, the situation in North-East Asia, a prolonged and recently exacerbated crisis sparked by the policy of a stubborn and paranoid totalitarian regime, has brought back the dreadful fear of nuclear confrontation. Inequality has continued to grow, while, in contrast, the world becomes wealthier, which casts serious doubt on the validity of promises and

guarantees of positive results for the benefit of all so often advocated for from this very rostrum.

No country, however large, rich or powerful, can face or solve such problems alone. The challenges require a unified vision and a concerted response. In an increasingly globalized world, our visions and actions should be inclusive and universal and bring people, communities and countries together. As the leader of a small nation, I hereby reiterate our pledge that we will faithfully do our part.

The increase in violent extremism and the number of non-State armed groups perpetrating atrocities, particularly against ethnic and religious minorities, continue to represent one of our most pressing challenges. The decisive action taken by the international coalition has paid off. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) has lost almost 90 per cent of the territory it once controlled, and its ability to wage war has been severely diminished. Yet let us make no mistake; its defeat on the ground does not mean that it will disappear. Our response to the extremism and radicalization that leads to terrorism must continue and adapt to the nature of that persistent threat itself. Albania was among the first countries to join the Global Coalition in the fight against ISIS and international terrorism. We are now implementing a three-year action plan as an instrument for implementing our national strategy on countering violent extremism.

We welcome the increased attention that has been given to the role of regional organizations in security issues. In that respect, we greatly appreciate and welcome the close cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union (EU) on the Common Security and Defence Policy platform.

All over the world, people want to be safe and free from violence, oppression, persecution and fear. They want to be treated with dignity and know that their lives matter, regardless of gender, race, national or social origin, religious belief, political affiliation, property, birth or any other status. To achieve those goals, we need to go beyond declaratory undertakings. People rightly demand us to show responsibility and an ability to act. The pledge to leave no one behind is the central theme of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Albania is fully committed to protecting and promoting all human rights, particularly women's rights, which is another major battle for change that my Government is leading. I am proud to announce that, for the second time in a row in Albanian history, half of the members of my Government are women. They bring leadership skills, strength of character, commitment to our European values and special devotion to serving the Albanian people.

Furthermore, women count for approximately 30 per cent of the members of our Parliament and more than 45 per cent of our public administration. Those may sound like mere statistics, but they rather reflect a platform that ensures that the role of women in development and change is recognized, their rightful place in the society is secured and their voice is heard. It is my deep belief that the empowerment of women serves as a powerful driver of overall economic development and national prosperity.

One of the main national priorities for my country is to join the European Union. It is not just one of our foreign policy objectives and is not a contractual relation of sorts. For us, European integration lies at the heart of our overall development, since it touches every cell of our development architecture.

We are resolved to deliver on the fundamentals that consolidate the pillars of a democratic State, a functioning economy and a Government that works for its citizens. We want to measure our progress with results, and the very thorough justice reform we are implementing is a shining example of that.

In turn, we expect our EU partners to do their part and to clear the way towards finally opening accession talks. It will be a historic milestone, but also a strong encouragement for us to continue on the same path. We hope that the European Union, despite the current crisis, continues to believe that the enlargement process remains the best European catalyst for security, peace, development and prosperity. It has proved so in the past and remains the right bet for the future.

A couple of months ago, at the general elections, I was re-elected as Head of Government by the citizens of Albania. They have agreed with our plans for the Albania we want. Expectations are high, and so is our resolve to meet them. Our target is to ensure a sustainable economic growth of 5 per cent during my current mandate.

That brings me to one of my favourite subjects — the development of regional cooperation and the transformation of the Western Balkans into an

area of free movement for people, goods, capitals and ideas, benefiting everyone in the region. That remains one of the main pillars of our foreign policy.

There were times in the past when we would come here and spend time and energy competing with some of our neighbours on how to belittle each other, telling our one-sided stories and trying to convince the world of our specific narratives. Hopefully, that is long gone. The best proof of the profound change in the Western Balkans lies in our joint efforts, with a shared sense of responsibility and a common purpose to make the region a natural part of Europe.

Together with the European Union, and based on its principles and policies, we are working to bring down every barrier to free trade by encouraging transnational economies. A new and vibrant regional economic area, which we agreed on in July in Trieste, will boost trade and benefit our economies. I do not have the slightest doubt that it will help us to protect and promote everyone's national interests, respect the rights of minorities, strengthen good neighbourly relations and move our countries and the region as a whole towards the European Union.

Strong and healthy relations with the European Union have proved key to stability and reform progress in the Balkans. We have noticed that when the EU is overly preoccupied with itself, that bond is fragile and insecure. That is why this important relationship should be continually nurtured and strengthened, because it also facilitates regional cooperation, increased understanding and work towards reconciliation in the best European tradition and record.

As President Junker stated just a few weeks ago in his address on the state of the European Union, there is need for a credible enlargement perspective so that the Western Balkans can attain more stability in the EU. Revitalizing the enlargement policy will be the best deterrent to the disintegration narrative that is fuelled by populist ideas. It is my firm belief that as much as we need the European Union, the European Union needs a stronger, more developed and coherent Western Balkans.

We are well aware of that. And practice has shown that in order to build a fully functioning region, all of its members must be treated the same way. That is why we think that the admission of Kosovo to every regional body, with the same rights as other countries, is of paramount significance. Many have used the Assembly over the past years to express worries and fear that Kosovo's independence would unleash dark forces that no one would be able to control. We have seen nothing of the sort. Instead, what has really happened it that Albanians in Kosovo and Albania, as well as Serbs, once threatened with extermination by a brutal regime, are now free citizens living in democratic countries and contributing to further developing an open society.

Who can deny the impressive achievements made by Kosovo in less than a decade of independence? They include the consolidation of its democratic institutions, good governance, exemplary multi-ethnic and interreligious coexistence and evident progress in the Euro-Atlantic integration process. Every credible report on the current situation in the Western Balkans would undoubtedly lead to the same conclusion — today the Western Balkans is far better off than it was three or five years ago, let alone 10. Kosovo's independence has not unleashed any dark forces. On the contrary, it has brought stability to the entire region.

For several years, Serbia and Kosovo have been engaged in serious dialogue on the normalization of their relations, with the mediation and facilitation of the European Union. After centuries of mistrust, a climate of trust and regional cooperation for both countries is a growing reality. That serves as an even greater reason to remind those countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo to consider doing so as soon as possible. That should not be seen as defiance or a loss, as it is often wrongly portrayed. We have said it before and we will say it again: recognizing Kosovo, establishing relations and helping Kosovo move forward, which is something that 114 Member States have done so far, constitute a direct contribution to bettering the lives of Kosovo's citizens and investing in the security and stability of the whole region and all of its countries, including Serbia.

Let me conclude by highlighting the need for the United Nations to change in order to remain relevant, live up to its responsibilities, secure the promise of sustainable development, ensure human rights and guarantee peace and security for future generations. We are aware that such reform is about what we can and must do together in order to better support our common efforts in transforming lives. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development points the way towards a better future, the future we want and the future that our children deserve. We cannot and must not fail to deliver on that promise. Albania stands ready to do its part and

cooperate with all those willing to invest in the future and make our world a better place for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Muscat (Malta): There can be no peace while poverty, especially extreme poverty, exists. Peace is not just about the absence of war or conflict. Rather, is is about managing and addressing climate change, migration and food and water insecurity. The instrument of the United Nations that weaves sustainable peace together with universal challenges is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, Malta, as President of the Council of the European Union, has worked hard with its other member States to achieve a successful march towards a new European consensus on development that encompasses the 2030 Agenda through a resolute plan of action to eradicate poverty.

Never has it been more urgent to work to preserve the future of humankind. The 2030 Agenda is the first step towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Every sector of society must be on board if we are to deliver on such an arduous task. As the Commonwealth's Chair-in-Office, I would like to highlight its strong commitment to its role in realizing the SDGs. The Commonwealth represents 52 different realities, which has led us to launch, in broad terms, a number of common initiatives to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Malta is taking action at the national level. We have made a voluntary commitment to designating 30 per cent of all waters under Maltese jurisdiction as marine protected areas. As is well known, Malta has been at the forefront of international maritime and marine-related issues. Fifty years ago, Malta's first Permanent Representative to the United Nations, the late Arvid Pardo, made a famous speech that triggered the negotiation of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (see A/C.1/PV.1515). It is in a similar spirit that we support the valuable work being done to achieve a legally binding international instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, which will be crucial to finally bringing legal protection to the biodiversity of the high seas. For our part, we will continue contributing to the good governance of the oceans by hosting the next Ocean Conference in Malta in October. Furthermore, we fully support the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on ocean governance that would report to the General Assembly through the Secretary-General.

I also wish to underline the recent initiative undertaken by the Commonwealth to develop a "blue charter", which will serve to assist the countries of the Commonwealth, most of them small developing States, in meeting the requirements outlined in SDG 14. Likewise, we wholeheartedly welcome the November 2016 entry into force of the Paris Agreement. It is only by greening our actions that we can ensure that sustainable development complements and respects Mother Earth. Malta, together with all of its partners in the European Union, is strongly committed to the Paris Agreement.

As a Government, we base our policies on four overarching principles: social mobility, social justice, equality and unity. Only today did we learn that, for another year in a row, fewer people in Malta are at risk of poverty. That follows our Government's efforts to distribute the proceeds that come from sustained growth fairly. That is an achievement that is as dear to us as our record-setting economic growth and minimal levels of unemployment. It is exactly what we strive for. Our raison d'être is what we describe as prosperity with a purpose.

A prosperous future must be accompanied by an inclusive society. People who live in fear or who are oppressed or discriminated against cannot realize their potential, and are therefore not at peace. Malta seeks to lead by example and ensure equality as a hallmark

of our political legacy. We have put human rights, equality and empowerment at the forefront of our political agenda, particularly on the priority issues of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer rights and gender equality. We have redefined marriage to grant full equality and affirm gender neutral access. All this has been complemented by amendments to our constitution to protect people against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. These individual choices should really have as little significance as the colour of one's eyes.

The economic and political empowerment of our citizens, regardless of their gender, is a priority for us. We have been gradually introducing measures to help reconcile work and family responsibilities. We are proud to be the only European country providing universal free child care to all working parents, an initiative that has liberated the potential of so many women in our society. We want to ensure more gender-balanced political representation, coupled with recent initiatives to increase youth participation by lowering the voting age in general and in European elections from 18 to 16 years of age, after having already lowered it for local elections.

Malta, despite its small size, can now serve as a beacon of political courage that inspires others to introduce concrete measures and reforms. Everyone must feel empowered in today's society. The protection of marginalized and vulnerable people is a must if we are to strive for an inclusive world. The United Nations is pivotal in all this. It must continue to spearhead, sustain and mobilize the international community as we journey along the ambitious path to 2030.

But so much more must be done. The exploitation of human misery knows no boundaries. Migrant smuggling and human trafficking by criminal groups are prevalent all over the world, and Malta has witnessed much of that very close to home, along the central Mediterranean routes. As a State member of the European Union, Malta is part of a wider European response aimed at tackling human-trafficking networks in the Mediterranean Sea.

However, without a global response, national and even regional action is insufficient. Malta welcomes the progress that has been made in developing a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. That should reaffirm the sovereign right of States to decide their immigration policies, but it should also commit them to building a migration system and institutions that operate in a timely manner so that migrants are treated fairly and with dignity. It should protect migrants' human rights and create awareness of the importance of combating exploitation and modern slavery. It should lead campaigns against xenophobia while providing support for the integration of long-term migrants and taking account of the feelings of people in host countries. It is also our belief that although the global compact should encompass all of these measures, it should also facilitate orderly, safe and regular migration, while committing States, particularly those of origin and transit, to taking action to reduce illegal and unmanaged flows.

Challenging times require us to act swiftly to meet such challenges. And that time is now. It is sooner rather than later. Systematic action by stakeholders at all levels and across all strata is crucial if its benefits are to be felt by people in every corner of the world. The United Nations is the prime mobilizer and anchor of international peace, security and stability and has a crucial role to play if we are to secure a peaceful, sustainable and better world for all. Malta is a firm believer in the overarching power of multilateralism. We do not believe that the United Nations is simply a sum of its parts. Rather, it is a force that grows exponentially when we think and act as one rather than alone.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister for Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde.

Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister for Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister of Reform of the

Republic of Cabo Verde, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Silva (Cabo Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese, English text provided by the delegation*): I am very pleased and honoured to be taking part in this meeting of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I bring with me the warm greetings of the Cabo Verdean people both living in the country and in the diaspora.

I want to assure Secretary-General António Guterres of the full support of the Government of Cabo Verde, especially in carrying out the reforms he has announced aimed at strengthening the broad delivery capacity, transparency and accountability of our Organization.

I salute the President of the Assembly at its seventy-second session, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, and wish him every success. We listened with particular interest to the programme he has announced for his presidency, whose six points are interlinked and geared to ensuring people's protection, dignity and well-being. Indeed, the theme proposed for the seventy-second session could not be more appropriate, given the underlying objective of the President's programme to bring the United Nations ever closer to the people.

Cabo Verde prides itself on being a nation with five and a half centuries of history, and on having built a creole identity of its own at the junction between Africa and Europe, while also being open to the world, with a significant diaspora in several countries and embodying the peaceful coexistence we wish to see in all nations. As a small island country that has few natural resources and no mineral resources at all, we know that we can only affirm ourselves in the concert of nations and in the global economic system by exemplifying political, institutional and social stability; by displaying cosmopolitanism, being trustworthy in our relations with development partners and investors; by upholding the values of democracy, freedom, human dignity and full citizenship; and by proving the quality of our institutions and the excellence of our human resources. Although intangible, they are our greatest assets and the foundation of our development process. Our only option is to value those assets and to make them distinctive and focused on the people who are truly our development actors and beneficiaries — the children, young people, women and men of all countries.

I raise these points because I agree that it is appropriate to focus on people. Women and men in every country need political, institutional, socioeconomic and educational environments that release their creative energy and their capacity to innovate and learn, to work, cooperate and trust, to self-organize and to be accountable. That is possible only in environments of peace and security that establish a belief in the future in people, as opposed to simply living one day at a time, beset with unease and limited horizons.

The people and the Government of Cabo Verde are concerned about the current international context, where not only do old disputes persist but where we are also seeing new internal political crises, armed conflicts, terrorist acts and the organized crimes of trafficking in drugs, people and weapons and piracy, as well as other transnational ideological trends, such as populism, racial supremacy, xenophobia and intolerance of human and cultural diversity.

Such ills are detrimental to global peace, because they cause human suffering, claim lives and contribute to other humanitarian tragedies, such as the unprecedented increase we are seeing in the numbers of refugees, as well as in hunger and violence against women and children. They undermine the rule of law, weaken democracy, threaten the territorial integrity of States, corrupt the bases of economic and social progress and endanger coexistence at both the national and international levels. These evils, unfortunately, spare no region in a globalized world.

Just as the threats to security are global, so are the challenges. The opportunities for combat ing them effectively are also global, and permanent representation for Africa on the Security Council is therefore fully justified. The Government of Cabo Verde supports reform of the Security Council aimed at enabling it to reflect today's changing world by integrating permanent representation for Africa into its broader composition. In our view, considering that the positions of both sides have already been sufficiently expressed, it is time to start negotiations based on a text.

Thanks to the United Nations, for the first time humankind has a holistic and comprehensive agenda that offers a real opportunity for sustainable and inclusive development, not only because it integrates the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, but also because it considers the cross-cutting issues of peace, security, justice and necessary partnerships and promotes the call to leave no one behind.

Now, two years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the challenges lie in its implementation. The United Nations must therefore be able to play a catalytic role in forming consensus and mobilizing resources to make a difference on the implementation, funding and capacity-building fronts. In that regard, we commend the Secretary-General's ongoing exercise aimed at adapting the United Nations development system and reforming the Secretariat's management structures to meet the challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

In that regard, we should focus particularly on the situation of middle-income countries, including small island developing States that have graduated to that status, such as Cabo Verde. This category of countries needs a common response in terms of new metrics that can provide a more systemic assessment of their financial needs and structural vulnerabilities.

For small island developing States, the swift and rapid implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate change is a priority, as it should be for the whole world.

Cabo Verde expresses its solidarity with the victims of recent hurricanes. While there have always been hurricanes, the bad news is that with climate change they tend to be more frequent, cruel and destructive. The consequences are devastating for the regions and countries that are most vulnerable from an environmental and economic point of view, such as small island developing States and their regions. Every new day is one day too late for vigorous and globalized action on the factors that trigger and accelerate climate change.

For Cabo Verde, the rule of law and democracy are not mere options; above all, they are essential to ensuring objective, transparent and predictable governance, both nationally and internationally. Cabo Verde's internal order is aligned with international positions and practices in the field of human rights through the Constitution of the Republic and its laws, institutions, public policies and social practices. We recognize, however, that there have been difficulties within the United Nations in harmonizing positions regarding the universalization of human rights principles and practices, and that we must pursue that objective through dialogue and respect among parties.

In that regard, I would like to highlight the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a pact with Member States and a circle of leadership on preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse in all United Nations operations, above all in the context of peacekeeping and humanitarian action. That initiative will give greater dignity to our world's most vulnerable people, especially women and girls, and promote their rights.

As a supporter of international relations governed by international law, Cabo Verde actively participates in codifying such law by joining and taking part in negotiations and by signing, ratifying and implementing most of the international instruments in a broad spectrum of areas. In that context, Cabo Verde has already deposited its instrument of ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, concluded in New York on 7 July.

We welcome the success of the preparatory work towards developing an international legal instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Moreover, we support the convening of a diplomatic conference in 2018 to work towards such a convention issue, which should have safeguards for the specific situation of small island developing States.

The conclusion of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) was a historic moment in the fight against impunity for those responsible for the most serious crimes against humanity, and I therefore express Cabo Verde's firm support to the ICC. Strengthening the Court is a duty that the present generation owes to future ones.

As written by a poet and songwriter, and later sung by the diva Cesária Évora, Cabo Verde is "ten little grains of sand" in the middle of the Atlantic. Despite our small size, we want to make Cabo Verde a country with relevance in the Middle Atlantic in terms of economic stature, security and diplomacy for peace and the promotion of freedom and democracy. We intend to position Cabo Verde as a transit hub in the Middle Atlantic for tourism, air transport, port operations, financial and investment operations, business localization and development in the digital and nano-technological economy, and in the attraction of investment and skills from the diaspora.

Cabo Verde promotes collective and cooperative security systems, as necessitated by the transnational nature of crime and its location. We are seeking to

position ourselves as a useful interlocutor in the concert of nations for dialogue, peace and tolerance. Its history and location have transformed Cabo Verde into a country born of mergers between Europe and Africa, a country that maintains good relations with all nations of the world. We would like to value and develop those assets strategically. That is our vision and purpose for our economy, security and diplomacy. It is embodied in our strategic plan for sustainable development, which has already been completed and is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Partnerships are an integral and indispensable part of the 2030 Agenda, and national ownership will find in them an unquestionable complement so that our strategic plan for sustainable development can succeed, with the United Nations at the forefront.

Happiness is the ultimate right to which the people of the world aspire. The 2030 Agenda has given the world not only a vision but also a road map for bringing happiness to people and leaving no one behind on the path to sustainable development. In 1945, the peoples of the United Nations showed their determination to conduct humankind down a path that would not lead to war. Today, with the 2030 Agenda, they will be able to determine another course for humankind and for people who struggle with poverty and a lack of development alternatives.

It is up to us — we, the peoples of the United Nations — to support both the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session in this honourable and great task of advancing the happiness agenda.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister for Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam.

Mr. Pham Binh Minh (Viet Nam): I extend my warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

My special thanks also go to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat. Only 10 months into his term of office, Mr. Guterres has already left his mark on the Organization's work for peace, development and human rights.

On 20 September 1977, exactly 40 years ago, Viet Nam was admitted to the United Nations as its 149th Member. One day later, the then Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Viet Nam stood right here at this rostrum and addressed the General Assembly (see A/32/PV.1). Representing a nation devastated by decades of war, he affirmed a unified Viet Nam's pledge to cooperate closely with other Member States in striving tirelessly to turn the lofty goals of the United Nations into reality. Those goals are peace, national independence, democracy and social progress.

Those 40 years have been an era of transformation for my country. Today, Viet Nam is a dynamic economy on a path to reform and sustainable development. We have transformed ourselves from being aid-dependent to a lower middle-income country. Our efforts to implement the Millennium Development Goals have helped to bring millions of Vietnamese out of poverty.

But one thing has not changed. Viet Nam today is as committed as ever to the United Nations. We are a staunch supporter and proponent of multilateralism with the United Nations at its core. We believe in the fundamental role of international law and the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of respect for sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity, non-interference, of refraining from the threat or use of force and of working for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

We are gathered here as the world is undergoing profound and fast transformations. The fourth industrial revolution, particularly the advance of digital technology, is creating unprecedented opportunities for development for all. Enormous efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are under way, and yet our world is still fraught with turmoil, uncertainties and fragility. While peace and cooperation prevail, people around the world are facing unprecedented challenges to their security and development. Political instability and the risk of conflicts, disasters and climate change threaten the sustainable development of all nations.

Terrorism and weapons of mass destruction have gone global and are a threat to everyone.

Efforts to achieve disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation have not progressed as expected. The worst migration and humanitarian crisis since the Second World War continues to unfold. For many decades, the desire to be able to live in peace has remained a distant dream for millions of people. Together, with the slow and unsustainable growth of the global economy, globalization and economic integration are now facing a less certain future. Inequality within and between countries remains one of the biggest challenges of our time. The impact of climate change is ever more real and far beyond what has been predicted. This year, we have witnessed multiple natural disasters that have inflicted heavy losses in human life and property in Cuba, Mexico, the United States and other Caribbean countries.

Given those daunting challenges, the theme chosen for this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" could not have been more timely. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the international community has clearly chosen sustainable development as the path towards a better destiny for current and future generations. It is now incumbent on us to make that ambitious plan a reality. Developing countries should be allowed more favourable conditions and resources to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. We call on developed nations to fulfil their commitments on providing financial assistance and technology transfer for developing countries.

On the path to sustainable development, we must place the interests of the people at the centre of all our policies and actions. If we do not, we will not be able to ensure a decent life for all. I do not believe that life can be decent when poverty, unemployment and epidemics are still not effectively addressed. It cannot be decent if it is still threatened by climate change and disasters. Above all, we will not succeed in our quest for sustainable development and a decent life for all if we cannot secure sustainable peace.

Having enjoyed peace and independence for the past four decades, we now know what peace can bring about. Sustaining peace must always be at the top of our agenda. That major undertaking will take strong commitment and cooperation. I believe we will need to come together to strengthen multilateralism to achieve those goals.

For today's global challenges, multilateralism has been shown to provide the most effective solutions. Multilateral institutions are venues in which countries can align their various interests, manage disputes and differences, and promote cooperation. However, trust in multilateralism will falter if those institutions fail to prove their effectiveness or lack consensus on common goals and principles. Global and regional multilateral mechanisms should therefore function in a transparent, effective and responsive manner.

The United Nations must be at the centre of coordination and joint efforts to address global challenges, building an ever more comprehensive system of rules and norms with a mechanism for ensuring objectiveness, fairness and equality. To do that, the United Nations must undertake comprehensive reforms, from its organizational structure and working methodologies to the way that development resources are mobilized and allocated. Viet Nam supports efforts to reform the United Nations in that regard and will participate responsibly in the process.

International law is an essential foundation of order and stability in international relations. Wars, conflicts and tension occur today mainly because international law is not fully respected or observed in good faith. We believe that by upholding international law, peace can be secured. We should take concrete action, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, to prevent conflicts, build confidence and peacefully settle disputes, including in the Middle East and Africa, and we call for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. In that regard, we also find that the unilateral embargo on Cuba is inappropriate and call for its immediate removal.

We welcome the recent adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a historic milestone on the road to a world free of nuclear weapons. I am signing the Treaty today, and call on others to sign and ratify it so as to enable its entry into force as soon as possible. Let us all be clear — the danger of nuclear weapons will loom over humankind as long as they continue to exist.

This year also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Viet Nam is proud to be a member. ASEAN is striving to build a rules-based and people-oriented community to strengthen its centrality in the evolving regional architecture and actively contribute to peace,

stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. Viet Nam is working closely with other ASEAN members to address common challenges.

With regard to the South China Sea dispute, Viet Nam and ASEAN call on all the parties concerned to exercise self-restraint and settle disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. They must fully respect diplomatic and legal processes, implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and expedite the completion of an effective and legally binding code of conduct.

Viet Nam also took pride in hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum this year, as we seek to build an Asia-Pacific partnership for sustainable and inclusive development in the twenty-first century.

At the global level, Viet Nam has actively engaged in the work of the United Nations, serving on the Human Rights Council from 2014 to 2016 and as a member of the Economic and Social Council for the term 2016-2018. We have begun to implement our national plan of action for implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We will present our voluntary national review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2018. In March, Viet Nam hosted a high-level Euro-Asia regional meeting on improving cooperation on transit and trade facilitation.

Since 2014, Viet Nam has sent its officers to work in United Nations peacekeeping missions in Africa and is preparing for the deployment of level-two field hospitals. Before that, in 2009, Viet Nam presented its candidature for non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the term 2020-2021. We believe that those are the most practical ways we can contribute to the cause of sustainable peace and security.

I am confident that through our concerted effort and the strength of multilateralism, we will fulfil our mission to maintain peace and security and secure a decent life and a sustainable future for all.

The meeting rose at noon.

United Nations A/72/PV.16

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

16th plenary meeting
Friday, 22 September 2017, 12 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Sauer (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at noon.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia.

Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Chastanet (Saint Lucia): Saint Lucia congratulates Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and assures him of the full support and cooperation of our delegation during his tenure.

We thank his predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, for his able stewardship of the Assembly during the past year.

For small island States like my own in the Caribbean region, the promise of the United Nations is being tested today more than ever. The world is experiencing extraordinary changes at a breathtaking pace — changes that are reshaping the way we live, the way we work, our planet and the very nature of peace and security.

I arrived in New York earlier this week after a tour of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Irma on islands in the Caribbean, and for the entire week I have been engaged in discussions focused on the region's recovery efforts. I have also watched, from afar and with a heavy heart, further destruction to my region — with Hurricane Maria's crushing blow to the sister islands of Dominica and Puerto Rico, claiming many lives and saddling those islands with hundreds of millions — if not billions — in damage.

I have also listened in dismay to the silence of many, and the weak acknowledgement by others, regarding the crisis in our region. It has awakened in me the fear that we may be on our own to chart a path forward for our region. While some continue to doubt and deny the assessments of science, it is impossible to avoid the facts of climate change. In less than a month Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Cuba, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, the Dominican Republic, Saint Bart, Saint John, Saint Thomas, the Turks and Caicos, Sint Maarten, and Saint Martin have

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all fallen victim to the ravages of the hurricanes, which have left death and carnage in their wake. I can also add Florida and Texas. The impact has been without discrimination.

Let us acknowledge the fact that small island developing States have repeatedly warned the international community that a failure to respond adequately to climate change would betray our children and condemn future generations to certain doom. I dare say that we do not have the luxury to be silent on that front anymore. We must act now. The effect of natural disasters does not have a diplomatic solution. What is needed is tangible action. The future is now, and the challenges are profound. What is fast becoming the new normal is the intensification of extreme weather events, which demands from us real solutions in real time. No longer can we depend on the old mechanisms with their dense bureaucracies that delay or limit a nation's ability to safeguard its citizens during a crisis and slow the rebuilding effort.

I remind all here that Saint Lucia, along with most of our sister States of the Caribbean Community, is anchored at the heart of hurricane alley, with our people on the front line, and all too often we are the first to endure the ravages of Mother Nature's fury when the storms come off the Atlantic Ocean. Today, as we look to the world for leadership and partnership, we thank France, China and Germany for their continued leadership on climate-change issues. The Government and the people of Saint Lucia offer their most sincere condolences and whatever support that we can to those in need.

The ties that bind our peoples run deep; the pain of one is the pain of all. We ask that the global community follow that ethos. We never forget that we are one global ecosystem that demands that we all be our brother's keeper. Our Nobel Laureate, Sir Derek Walcott, has spoken to the sense of responsibility to one's neighbour that is rooted in our cultural DNA and the imperative of helping, not out of a sense of duty but out of a sense of community. That was exemplified by Mr. Orlando Smith, the Premier of the British Virgin Islands, as Dominica faced the imminent threat of Hurricane Maria. Mr. Smith, whose own island had already been brutalized by Hurricane Irma, offered his unwavering support to the Prime Minister of Dominica, Mr. Skerrit. Even in our destitution, we in the Caribbean open our hearts and our means to those in need.

I pause here to share our condolences to others in our hemisphere, notably Mexico, which has long been of support to us, but now faces a mounting death toll from the earthquakes that have struck that country.

I stand here and ask that we revisit many of our lofty goals, as we see the lack of equity that is at the heart of all of our discussions and seek to address it. Multilateral discussions on development, resilience and the sustainable development of our countries should be grounded in what is equitable and just. We must acknowledge that the United Nations will never succeed when only a few prosper and many, whose number is growing, do not. How can we, when the progress we make is fragile and unequal? How can we, when we indulge our differences to the exclusion of the work we must do together? How can we, when inequity remains the driving force of our international system, propelling some forward and leaving far too many behind? How can we, as leaders, talk about sustainable development goals, when the people of our countries continue to struggle just to survive?

Fundamentally, our global reality is an increasingly integrated one. No one is spared the perils of the convulsions in our world. Our economies, natural environment and people are all connected. We in this hemisphere are not impervious to the impact of the wars and the starvation that are taking place in the Middle East and Africa, the persecution that is taking place in Asia and the rise of nationalistic tendencies taking place in Europe. We are stacked in a global row of dominoes, where a disruptive event in one country begets similar or worse events in neighbouring countries. It spreads, impacting us all and testing our social, political and economic systems.

We live in a world of imperfect choices — choices between clinging to the old systems that do not serve us any longer and rethinking new ways to secure a better future. We must not turn away from the hard choices. We must not fear change. Our challenges are real, serious and numerous. We, the United Nations, must get better at the policies that strike at the root of the problem and ground our 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in one word: equity.

I must repeat a point stated earlier. In a time when inequity pervades every aspect of our international order, what hope do we have of successfully implementing the SDGs when the deck is stacked against many of our people? How do we ensure that all citizens have their

most basic needs satisfied, such as food on their plate, when we struggle from crisis to crisis? We must agree that there should be a minimum standard of living for each and every one of our citizens. We must maintain basic standards that provide adequate health care, education, housing, security and economic opportunity for every citizen of our countries. Without establishing such standards, we cannot engage in any meaningful discussion or plan of action.

That is what will stem the flow of migration. It will offer opportunities to be productive members of society. It will dull the urge that drives some to crime and others into the arms of groups that foment evil. Any overhaul of the United Nations system must be founded on the principle of equity. Without equity as a foundation, Sustainable Development Goals are dreams that go away when we open our eyes to the constant state of crisis confronting us.

I take this moment to assure the Secretary-General of my country's support for the effort needed to reform the Organization in order to address the new era and its responsibilities. At the heart of any reform of such a nature, we, nations both large and small, must play our role in protecting the rights of individuals everywhere. In the face of mounting challenges, we must seek the courage and wisdom to act boldly and collectively and revise outmoded programmes that are so glaringly inadequate for the needs of our time.

We have to harness new ideas and technologies and invest in the individuals and the generations who will build our future. We must see more in terms of outcomes and less in terms of bureaucracy. We must come here to make a difference and be able to return to our homes ready to deliver on the promises that we have made. The mobilization of the leadership of the world to come here will be all for naught if we do not deliver. We must come here to make a difference and not get carried away by name-calling. Rather, we must ground our discourse in mutual respect and a commitment to deliver to those we lead.

We must understand and acknowledge that when times change, so must we. Our claims to fidelity to the words of the Charter of the United Nations mean nothing if we do not create new responses to old and new challenges. We must be a source of hope for the poor, the sick and the marginalized so that we can ensure peace and a decent life for all our citizens on a sustainable planet. That requires that we constantly advance the principles of the Charter. The commitments that we make to each other must be honoured, which will, in turn, strengthen our mutual trust.

Within and beyond the Organization, we must look more honestly at how we categorize each other and how the development and donor community rank us. How can we call a country a middle-income country, based solely on its gross domestic product per capita, when we know that its location renders it vulnerable to natural disasters that have the capacity to bring it and its people to their knees?

It is unconscionable to see our peers forced to beg and plead for goodwill and to have to depend on commercial loan rates to rebuild broken economies, all because the traditional system is so unyielding, archaic and sometimes heartless in its design. That model must change to one that affords small and developing nations the real opportunity to survive and thrive in an increasingly cold global environment. The model has to change in order to afford all of us the opportunity to build back the infrastructure that can secure our futures and those of our people and have it be stronger and more resilient.

In closing, the people of my region are resilient. We are a people and a region committed to working together in order to rebuild stronger and better. In challenging times, we do not hesitate to commit our scarce resources to one another. We truly are our brothers' keepers.

We have also been very fortunate to receive support from friends near and far as we seek to make a better world for those who will follow us. In our case, friendships like those that we have with Taiwan, Cuba and Mexico, among others, allow us to envision a positive future. I ask that, while we may come from different places and with different priorities, we must never forget that we share a common future — a future that will be secure only if we meet the threats, challenges and opportunities that confront us together, with greater cooperation and understanding.

Our generation's task is to engage in a common effort towards a common purpose as we answer the call of our times. Let it be said by our children's children that we were tested and that we did not fail, but rather that we delivered to future generations a better world. We have that obligation to our people and to our world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to reiterate to the Secretary-General Cuba's support for his work at the helm of the United Nations and as a guarantor and advocate of international peace.

I would like to express my deep condolences to the relatives of the deceased and the victims of hurricanes Irma and Maria, as well as our readiness to increase our cooperation, to the extent of our modest possibilities, with the brother peoples and the Governments of Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda, which are small Caribbean islands that suffered terrible devastation, along with the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Saint Martin, Sint Maarten, the Virgin Islands and Anguilla. I call upon the international community to give the highest priority to the situation and to mobilize resources to assist the small Caribbean island States and territories that have suffered such devastation.

We would like to convey Cuba's warmest feelings of solidarity to the people and the Government of Mexico, particularly the victims and their relatives who were affected by earthquakes, and we reiterate our readiness to assist their people and support their recovery efforts with our modest efforts.

We also want to express our sorrow to the people of the United States, as well as our heartfelt condolences to the relatives of the deceased and to all victims of Hurricane Irma.

I speak on behalf of the people of Cuba, who are currently carrying out a colossal effort to recover from the severe damage caused to housing, agriculture, the power system and other services by Hurricane Irma. Despite the all-encompassing preventive measures — including the evacuation of more than 1.7 million people — and the full cooperation of all citizens, we suffered the loss of 10 people.

The grave damage to services, the loss of social and personal goods, and the hardships endured by families that spent many hours without electricity and/or water only strengthened the unity and solidarity of our noble and heroic people. The moving scenes of rescuers saving a girl and returning her to her mother, a little boy picking up a bust of José Martí from the rubble, students helping families they had never met before, soldiers from the Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior doing the toughest jobs, and local leaders heading the most difficult tasks have become all too familiar.

During a visit to the area that suffered the most severe devastation, President Raúl Castro issued an appeal that read:

> "These have been difficult days for our people, who, in just a few hours, have seen how what was built with great effort could be destroyed by a devastating hurricane. The images received during the past few hours are powerful, as is the spirit of resilience and victory of our people, who come back fighting in the face of every adversity."

On behalf of the Government and the people of Cuba, I sincerely appreciate the genuine expressions of solidarity and affection expressed by numerous Governments, parliaments, international organizations and representatives of civil society. I would like to convey my profound gratitude for the numerous offers of assistance that we have received.

I still have vivid and emotional memories of the imposing presence of Fidel Castro Ruz, Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Revolution, and the great validity of the ideas he expressed to the General Assembly. On behalf of our people and Government, I would like to express our gratitude for the expressions of respect, affection and admiration that we have received from so many.

Last Tuesday, President Donald Trump came here to convince us that he proposes to promote the prosperity of nations and persons. But in the real world the wealth possessed by eight men together is equivalent to the wealth shared by the 3.6 billion human beings who make up the poorest half of humanity. In terms of turnover, 69 of the 100 biggest entities in the world are transnational companies, not States. The turnover of the world's 10 biggest corporations is higher than the public revenues earned by 180 countries combined. Seven hundred million people live in extreme poverty, and 21 million

are victims of forced labour. In 2015, 5.9 million children died of preventable or curable diseases before reaching the age of 5. A total of 758 million adults are still illiterate.

Eight hundred and fifteen million people suffer from chronic hunger — tens of millions more than in 2015. Two billion are undernourished. Even if the precarious decreasing growth rate of recent years rebounds, 653 million persons will continue to face hunger by the year 2030. Given current trends, we will not be able to eradicate hunger by the year 2050.

There are 22.5 million refugees. Humanitarian tragedies associated with migrant flows are worsening and increasing amid the clearly unjust current international economic and political order. The construction of walls and barriers, as well as the laws and measures adopted to prevent the waves of refugees and migrants, have proved to be cruel and ineffective. There is a proliferation of exclusive and xenophobic policies that violate the human rights of millions of people and fail to solve the problems of underdevelopment, poverty and armed conflicts — the main causes of migration and refugee claims.

Military expenditures have increased to $1.7 trillion. That reality contradicts those who claim that there are not enough resources to eradicate poverty. Despite all the rhetoric, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development lacks the means for its implementation, owing to the egoism and lack of political will of the United States and other industrialized countries.

What is the miraculous solution that President Donald Trump recommends to us in the absence of the financial flows of the Marshall Plan? Who will contribute the resources for that? How can that be reconciled with the "America First" idea advanced by President Reagan decades ago and by Trump today? The President of the United States ignores and distorts history and believes that a chimera is a goal to be pursued. The production and consumption patterns of capitalism are unsustainable and irrational and will inexorably lead to the destruction of the environment and the end of the human species.

Can anyone forget about the consequences of colonialism, slavery, neocolonialism and imperialism? Could the several decades of bloody military dictatorships in Latin America be referred to as an example of successful capitalism? Does anyone know of any form of neoliberal capitalism that has benefited us all, as opposed to that which destroyed the Latin American economies in the 1980s?

It is urgent and essential for the United Nations to work to establish a new participatory, democratic, equitable and inclusive international economic order, as well as a new financial architecture. They must take into account the needs and particularities of developing countries and the asymmetries that exist in world trade and finance as a result of centuries of exploitation and plundering. Industrialized countries have the moral obligation, the historical responsibility and sufficient financial and technological means to do that.

However, not even the rich will be able to enjoy the forecast prosperity if climate change is not stopped. Cuba regrets the decision taken by the Government of the United States, which has historically been the principal greenhouse-gas-emitting country on the planet, to withdraw that country from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In 2016, and for the third consecutive year, the records for the average global temperature increase have been broken, which confirms that climate change is a threat to the survival of humankind and the sustainable development of our peoples. We reiterate our solidarity with the small island developing States, especially those in the Caribbean and the Pacific, which are the most affected by climate change and for whom we request just, special and differentiated treatment. We also support the priority attention accorded to the needs of sub-Saharan Africa.

The United States Government has come here to tell us that, in addition to prosperity, the other two "beautiful pillars" of the international order are sovereignty and security. We all share the common responsibility of preserving the existence of human beings in the face of nuclear weapons. An important contribution to the achievement of that goal was the historic adoption and signing, under the auspices of the Assembly, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which bans the existence, use and threat of use of such weapons, which have the capacity to annihilate the human species.

The United States has strongly opposed that treaty. It announced that it will invest $700 billion in military expenditures, and it is developing an extremely aggressive nuclear and military doctrine, based on the threat of the use of force and the use of force. NATO member States have violated international peace and security and international law by promoting

military interventions and unconventional wars against sovereign States. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, pointed out:

> "When this philosophy of despoilment disappears, the philosophy of war will have disappeared" (*A/PV.872, para. 188*).

The unlawful imposition of unilateral coercive measures and the use of financial, judicial, cultural and communication tools to destabilize Governments and deny peoples their right to self-determination have become commonplace. I believe that the militarization and the covert use of information and communication technologies to attack other States have increased, while several developed countries strongly oppose the adoption of international treaties that would regulate cooperation aimed at securing a safe cyberspace.

The President of the United States manipulates the concepts of sovereignty and security to his exclusive benefit and to the detriment of all others, including his allies. The attempt to resort to military threat and force in order to stop the irreversible global trend towards multipolarization and polycentrism will seriously jeopardize international peace and security, which should be defended and preserved through international efforts. The principles of sovereign equality, respect for the territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs should be respected. The Charter of the United Nations and international law do not allow for reinterpretation.

United Nations reform should pursue the principal goal of responding to the pressing needs of people and the great disadvantaged majority. Multilateralism should be protected and reinforced so as to resist the imperial interests of domination and hegemony. The democratization of the Security Council, both in terms of its composition and its working methods, is a most urgent task. It is also essential to strengthen the General Assembly and recover the functions that have been usurped.

Patriotism, which was invoked in the statement of the United States, is a perversion of humanism and of love and loyalty to the homeland and the enrichment and defence of national and universal culture. It embodies an exceptionalist and supremacist vision of ignorant intolerance in the face of diverse political, economic, social and cultural models.

In developed countries, the loss of the legitimacy of political systems and parties has worsened, and voter abstention is on the rise. Legal and illegal corruption is spreading. There is the extreme case of the so-called special interests, or corporate payments, in exchange for benefits, in the country that spends the highest amount of money in electoral campaigns and where, paradoxically, a candidate with the lowest number of popular votes can be elected or be entitled to govern with the negligible support of voters.

There has been an increasing and unheard-of use of science and technology to exercise hegemony, mutilate national cultures and manipulate human behaviour, as in the case of so-called big data, or psychometry, used for political and advertising purposes. Seven Western consortiums keep strict control over what is being read, seen or heard on the planet. Technologies are being monopolized. The governance of digital networks is dictatorial and discriminatory, and despite appearances the digital divide between rich and poor countries is increasing. Opportunities and the rights of youth, migrants and workers are being curtailed, and their human rights are being openly and systematically violated.

The day before yesterday, the United States Vice-President, Michael Pence, ridiculously ignorant of the functions of the Security Council and attempting to establish new prerogatives, said that the Security Council should modify the composition and methods of the Human Rights Council, which "does not deserve its name" because "a clear majority of the Human Rights Council's members fail to meet even the most basic human rights standards".

I assume that Mr. Pence is not including his own country in that category, which in fact deserves to be included because of its pattern of the systematic violations of human rights, such as the use of torture, arbitrary detentions and imprisonment, as occurs in the Guantanamo naval base, the assassination of African Americans by law-enforcement agents, the killing of innocent civilians by its troops, xenophobia and repression against immigrants, including minors, and its limited compliance with international instruments.

We reaffirm our strongest condemnation of all forms and manifestations of terrorism, and we reject the application of double standards in combating them.

The urgent quest for a just and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East is based on the exercise

of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the existence of a free and independent State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The situation in the Western Sahara requires an effort, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, to ensure the Saharan people's ability to exercise self-determination and to ensure respect for their legitimate right to live in peace in their own territory.

Cuba reaffirms its support for the quest for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the war in Syria, without any foreign interference and with full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Threats to international peace and security stemming from the expansion of NATO's presence along the borders of Russia are on the rise. We continue to reject the unilateral and unjust sanctions imposed against that country.

We demand respect for the so-called nuclear agreement signed with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We reject the threat to totally destroy the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, home to 25 million human beings. War is not an option on the Korean peninsula; it would threaten the existence of hundreds of millions of people in that area and in neighbouring countries, and it would lead to a nuclear conflagration of unpredictable consequences. Only through dialogue and negotiations will it be possible to achieve a lasting political solution, which should take into account the legitimate concerns of all parties involved. We support the total denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, without foreign interference, with full respect for the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of the States concerned and strict adherence to the principle of the non-use or threat of use of force.

Today, new threats are looming over peace and stability in Latin America and the Caribbean, in open disrespect for the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed in Havana by the Heads of State and Government of our region in January 2014 at the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

We reiterate the statement made on 14 July by President Raúl Modesto Castro Ruz concerning the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela:

> "The aggression and putschist violence against Venezuela harms all of 'Our America' and only serves the interests of those set on dividing us in order to exercise their control over our peoples, unconcerned about causing conflicts of incalculable consequence in our region, such as those we are seeing in various parts of the world.
>
> "Today, we have warned that those attempting to overthrow the Bolivarian and Chavista revolution through unconstitutional, violent and putschist methods will shoulder a serious responsibility in the eyes of history."

We strongly reject the military threats against Venezuela, including the United States executive order that designates Venezuela a threat to the national security of the United States, and the unilateral, unjust and arbitrary sanctions applied against it.

We reiterate our unwavering solidarity with the Bolivarian and Chavista people and Government, and with its civic-military union led by Constitutional President Nicolás Maduro Moros. We denounce and condemn the Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act initiative promoted in the United States Congress as part of an interventionist approach intended to impose an economic embargo against the people and the Government of Nicaragua, to whom we reiterate our support.

We express our solidarity with former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, victim of political persecution intended to prevent him, by means of judicial disqualification, from running for direct elections. Lula, President Dilma Rousseff, the Workers' Party and the Brazilian people will always find Cuba on their side.

We reaffirm our historic commitment to the free determination and independence of the people of Puerto Rico.

We support the legitimate claim of Argentina for sovereignty over the Malvinas and the South Sandwich and South Georgia Islands.

Cuba will continue to contribute to the extent possible, and at the request of the parties involved, to efforts to achieve a stable and lasting peace in Colombia.

We will uphold our commitment to share our modest achievements with the peoples of the South, including the efforts of the 40,000 aid workers deployed in 64

countries, who are fighting today for the life and health of human beings.

On 16 June, the President of the United States, Mr. Donald Trump, announced the new Cuba policy of his Administration, which represents a setback in bilateral relations and undermines the basis established two years ago for a move towards a new type of relationship between our two countries that was characterized by respect and equality. The United States Government has decided to tighten the economic, commercial and financial embargo by imposing new obstacles to the already limited possibilities that the United States business community has to trade with and invest in Cuba as well as additional restrictions on United States citizens wishing to travel to our country.

Those decisions have ignored the support on the part of broad sectors in the United States, including the majority of Cuban émigrés, for the lifting of the blockade and the normalization of relations. They only serve the interests of a group of individuals of Cuban origin based in south Florida, which is an increasingly isolated minority group that insists on harming Cuba and its people for having decided to defend, at all costs, its right to be free, independent and sovereign. Today, we reiterate our condemnation of the measures aimed at tightening the blockade and reaffirm that any strategy intended to destroy the Cuban Revolution will fail. Likewise, we reject the manipulation of the human rights issue against Cuba, which has much to be proud of and has no need for lessons from the United States or from anyone else.

We wish to express our strongest condemnation of the disrespectful, offensive and interventionist statement against Cuba and the Cuban Government made three days ago from this rostrum by President Donald Trump (see A/72/PV.3). We remind him that the United States, where flagrant human rights violations raising deep concerns in the international community are being committed, does not have the slightest moral authority to judge my country. We reaffirm that Cuba will never accept any preconditions or impositions, nor will it ever renounce any of its principles.

With regard to the alleged incidents that have allegedly affected United States diplomatic officials in Havana, we categorically affirm that the Cuban Government rigorously and seriously abides by its obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations to ensure the protection and integrity of all diplomats without exception, including those of the United States, and that Cuba has never perpetrated nor will it ever perpetrate actions of that sort, nor has it allowed nor will it ever allow its territory to be used by third parties for such purposes.

Based on the preliminary results of the investigation, carried out with priority and with a high technical component, following instructions issued from the highest level of our Government, the Cuban authorities, having taken into account data provided by United States authorities, have not found any evidence whatsoever that could confirm the cause or the origin of the health disorders referred by United States diplomats and their families. The investigation seeking to clarify that issue is ongoing, and in order to be able to reach a conclusion, it will be crucial to able to count on the cooperation of the United States authorities. It would be unfortunate if a matter of that nature were to become politicized.

As has been expressed by Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz, Cuba is willing to continue negotiating all pending bilateral issues with the United States, on the basis of equality and absolute respect for the sovereignty and independence of our country. We will maintain a respectful dialogue and cooperation in areas of common interest with the United States Government. Cuba and the United States can cooperate and coexist, respecting our differences and promoting everything that benefits both countries and peoples, but no one should expect Cuba to make concessions that affect its sovereignty and independence.

The Cuban people will not cease their demand for the lifting and total elimination of the economic, commercial and financial blockade and will continue to denounce the strengthening of that policy. On November 1, Cuba will once again present to the General Assembly the annual draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

While inequality — the opulence of a few and the marginalization of many — is growing in today's world, the Cuban people will keep up its struggle to achieve the most just society possible. We will continue to steadily advance down the path of revolutionary transformation that has been sovereignly chosen by all Cubans to further improve our socialism.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Khemais Jhinaoui, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia.

Mr. Jhinaoui (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and wish him every success in his tasks.

I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his efforts to advance the lofty United Nations principles by promoting the pivotal role of our Organization, maintaining international peace and security, and promoting sustainable development.

I cannot fail to commend the efforts of Mr. Peter Thomson as President of the General Assembly at its previous session, particularly with regard to the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The theme of this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", is in line with the priorities of the Tunisian Government for the coming period. In that respect, Tunisia has, since 2011, made great strides towards democratization and in promoting the rule of law and State institutions. That includes adopting a Constitution that promotes the values of democracy, human rights, women's rights and youth rights. We also held our first fair and transparent legislative and presidential elections in 2014.

As a young democracy, we are pursuing measures aimed at strengthening constitutional institutions and structural reforms at all levels, in accordance with a clear vision and consensus that include all components of Tunisian society. Achieving development, fighting corruption, promoting investment and reducing unemployment, as well as promoting good governance, while focusing at the same time on combating the scourge of terrorism and extremism, have presented many challenges on which we have focused our national capacities. We are confident that brotherly and friendly countries and the United Nations will continue supporting us in our efforts. We appreciate in particular the significant pledges made by many parties to support development in Tunisia at the International Conference to Support Tunisia's Economic, Social and Sustainable Development, Tunisia 2020, organized in Tunisia on 29 and 30 November 2016.

I note that Tunisia, in its fight against terrorism, has had to redirect a significant portion of its resources originally allocated to development. We are confronting that scourge by doubling the budget for our military and security forces. Thanks to the unity of the Tunisian people — a society that is premised on justice, equality and openness — and their commitment to democracy, we have been able to combat terrorism and foil its schemes. That has enabled us to restore security and stability and improve many economic indicators in our country.

Tunisia today is secure, like the majority of the countries in the world. It is endeavouring to promote its young democracy and its economy through significant reforms aimed at establishing a better business environment by attracting foreign investment and promoting tourism, as well as by seeking comprehensive development and meeting the needs and demands of our young people with regard to employment and a decent life.

The scourge of terrorism derives its strength from proliferating hotbeds of tension, conflict and violent extremism. That exacerbates the challenges facing the international community's fight against that menace, which excludes no region and recognizes no borders. Terrorism is also linked to all types of organized crime, the influx of refugees and migrants, human trafficking and the consequent large-scale violations of universal human rights.

Combating terrorism requires international cooperation and comprehensive and inclusive strategic partnership. We are confident that boosting the economy and development of our country, while working to ensure social peace and security, requires the active engagement of the international community at large in supporting our implementation of all the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular those that address environmental challenges, while mitigating the impacts of climate change on the economies of developing countries and the livelihoods of their people. We have therefore mainstreamed those goals in our national development plan for 2016-2020, and we have embarked upon implementing them in collaboration with the competent international agencies and regional structures — in particular the African Union, given the nexus between those goals and Agenda 2063 for African development.

We are also preparing to release our first national report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for the consideration of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In that respect, we would like to reiterate that it is important to take into account the priorities and specificities of each region and country when dealing with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Optimal utilization of all international and regional mechanisms, especially those dedicated to the financing of development, technology transfer and capacity-building, would support the efforts of African nations to achieve steady economic growth and sustainable development so as to put an end to poverty, marginalization and epidemics and work towards peaceful, just, inclusive and prosperous African communities.

We believe that environmental considerations are important in achieving sustainable development for all the world's nations. We therefore signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015, and we voluntarily committed to reducing our gas emissions by 41 per cent by 2030. Our commitment has also been demonstrated by the nationally determined contribution devoted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Tunisia upholds the principles of international legitimacy and supports all efforts aimed at maintaining international peace and security, in particular by strengthening our contributions to United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations. Therefore, efforts to promote the principles of justice and equality in international relations would benefit from improvements in the effectiveness of the United Nations work and its organs, in particular the Security Council, so that the Organization can better assume its crucial responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

The security and stability of the Arab region is an integral part of the world's stability. We therefore call for immediate political settlements of issues in our region, in particular the Palestine issue, which requires a comprehensive solution that brings justice to the Palestinian people, ends their suffering and enables them to recover their legitimate historical rights — especially the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international parameters and the Arab Peace Initiative.

I seize this opportunity to reiterate our ongoing concern over the Libyan crisis, and we reiterate Tunisia's commitment to stand by our Libyan brethren and urge them to bridge their differences and swiftly find a comprehensive political settlement to the crisis there. Within the framework of our mediation efforts among Libyan protagonists, our President Essebsi launched an initiative in December 2016 for a comprehensive political settlement of the Libyan crisis. Tunisia, believing in the role of neighbouring countries, has been keen to ensure positive engagement with Algeria and Egypt on the issue, so that we join our efforts to help the Libyans to end their differences and proceed with the political solutions sponsored by the United Nations.

It is important to unite international efforts on the Libyan situation, so that we can ensure progress on the political path and achieve convergence among Libyans under the supervision of the United Nations and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya. That is especially true given that our Organization is the guarantor for implementing commitments and is capable of adapting any amended agreement in accordance with Security Council resolutions. We seek in that connection to prevent any vacuum, which could worsen the anarchy and instability.

We commend the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ghassan Salamé, and we support the road map that he put forward on the holding of the High-level Meeting on Libya on 20 September and his call for the Dialogue Committee — comprising the Libyan House of Representatives and the State High Council — to launch a new round of talks in Tunisia within the framework of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and, under his supervision, to introduce the consensual amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement of Skhirat. We hope that that step will act as a springboard for reconciliation and consensus in Libya.

We reiterate today that it is important to reach a comprehensive and immediate political settlement to the situation in Syria, and we urge the Syrian parties to give priority to the vital interests of their nation with a view to reaching a consensus that preserves the unity and territorial integrity of Syria, putting an end to the catastrophic humanitarian tragedy endured by the Syrian people and addressing the serious ramifications of that conflict at the regional and international levels.

We are gravely concerned at the exacerbation of the security and humanitarian situation in Yemen. That calls for redoubling international efforts to push forward political consultations aimed at finding a solution to that crisis in a manner that preserves the territorial integrity and resilience of the country, and puts an end to the humanitarian suffering endured by the Yemeni people. With regard to Iraq, we commend the fact that that brotherly country, in collaboration with the international coalition against Da'esh, has made significant progress in its war against terror. We reiterate Tunisia's solidarity with Iraq in combating that serious scourge.

Regarding the situation of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, we reiterate our condemnation of the flagrant violations of human rights against that minority. We appeal to the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and to swiftly intervene to provide the necessary protection, ensure access to humanitarian assistance and save those people from the atrocities that they have been enduring.

We are confronted with many serious challenges and issues, such as hotbeds of tension, conflicts, combating terrorism and extremists, addressing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, supporting human rights, implementing development goals and reforming the United Nations, among other crucial matters. The role of the United Nations is, thus, central in finding solutions to deal with those challenges. There is also a great responsibility that we need to bear in confronting the challenges caused by international transformations, for which we need to shore up our efforts. On this occasion, I would like to commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to develop the United Nations system, particularly with regard to the repositioning of the United Nations development system and the promotion of a preventive approach in resolving international conflicts and maintaining international peace and security.

In conclusion, we reiterate Tunisia's resolve to continue to contribute actively to international action aimed at finding sound approaches and solutions to those difficult issues in a manner that preserves human dignity and enables the nations of the world to devote their efforts and resources to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development in a world of tolerance and intercultural solidarity among nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): I believe that I speak on behalf of everyone here when I say that our hearts and prayers are with everyone in the small States of the Caribbean, now facing the devastating effects of a series of hurricanes. Our deepest sympathy and prayers are also with the people of Mexico, who have suffered immensely from the deadly earthquake on Tuesday.

Over the past few days, the words "we the peoples" have been echoed in the General Assembly many times. Thailand shares the view of Secretary-General Guterres and many Member States that we need to focus more on people and less on bureaucracy. The United Nations must be less about debates and more about actions that truly impact changes on the ground.

In the General Assembly this year, it is gratifying to hear world leaders focusing on people. The life, survival and prosperity of a nation depend on the quality of life of its people. When people live decent lives, they thrive and, in turn, nations and our planet prosper. On the other hand, if people still have to struggle in their daily lives, have nothing to eat, nowhere to sleep, no schooling or health-care access, then the advancement of nations would be an unrealizable ambition. That is why we must focus on people.

In fact, we have long focused on the people of Thailand. Our late King, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, told us to listen to the people and to learn from them. He said that those living in the community know best about their conditions and needs. Development must not be top-down but bottom-up and must vary according to specific contexts. His Majesty laid the groundwork for the people-centred approach through the "sufficiency economy" philosophy, which stresses self-development and places emphasis on everyone's potential to mould their own future and live in harmony with nature. When each person can contribute meaningfully to his or her community, the life of the nation will surely be good.

Based on the sufficiency economy philosophy, the Royal Thai Government envisions the lives of our people and the life of our nation as stable, prosperous and sustainable. Our key national frameworks, namely, the 2017 Constitution, the 20-year National Strategy Framework and the twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan, have all been formulated to

focus on people first. Thailand has stepped up efforts to put in place a decentralized area-based development policy to empower those who will be affected and create a space to appreciate local wisdom and knowledge.

At the same time, Thailand is seeking to utilize science, technology and innovation to strengthen human capabilities and foster an enabling environment in our development paradigm. Currently, we aim to build a value-based economy under the Thailand 4.0 policy. The value-based economy encompasses various types of economy: a circular economy, in which resources are utilized efficiently and in an environmentally friendly manner; a distributive economy, where development is inclusive; and an innovative economy, where growth springs from ideas and knowledge. The value-based economy under the Thailand 4.0 policy requires human wisdom even more than high technology. That is why we are focusing on our people and putting human life-cycle development as our priority.

Since 2002, we have successfully embarked upon our universal health coverage system. That system represents an investment in our people and our future. At present, 99.87 per cent of the population enjoys some kind of health coverage. The Universal Health Coverage system has helped prevent more than 100,000 households from falling into poverty over the past decade. As Chair of the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative, Thailand will present a draft resolution at this session of the General Assembly to mark 12 December as World Universal Health Coverage Day. We hope to receive support from Member States in that regard.

Another recent example of how we focus on people is our national strategy to eliminate HIV/AIDS. By 2030, Thailand aims to reduce new HIV infections, lower the number of HIV/AIDS-related deaths and reduce discrimination related to HIV and gender. We are also proud to say that in 2016 the World Health Organization recognized Thailand as the first country in Asia, and the second country in the world, to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

The world is going through a critical time and is facing a series of shared challenges, such as extremism, terrorism, ongoing conflicts and irregular migration, along with environmental degradation, climate change and natural disasters. Another grave concern is the nuclear threat, which is looming over us and feels more real now than ever before. It is at times like this that humankind is truly being tested. Two days ago Thailand signed and deposited our instrument of ratification to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We are proud to be among the first countries to do so. We wish to call on others to do the same. By doing so, we are sending a message to our children and grandchildren that we care.

Thailand shares the international community's grave concern about the situation on the Korean peninsula, where we encourage all parties to find a peaceful solution, along with the full implementation of Security Council resolutions.

Thailand is also deeply concerned about ongoing violence and conflicts elsewhere in the world, including the situation in Rakhine state, which recently caused hundreds of thousands of people to leave their homes. We are fully aware of the complexities of humanitarian situations, which cannot be solved overnight. Those situations call for long-term political and socioeconomic solutions. Sustaining peace and sustaining development must go hand in hand.

In order to enable people to have decent lives, we must build inclusive societies where everyone has a sense of belonging and feels that his/her voice is heard and their views taken into consideration. We must empower the most vulnerable in our societies — those suffering in poverty, women, children and persons with disabilities — and leave no one behind. Their rights and dignity must be respected. They must be protected by law and have equal access to justice. Only then can we realize a truly inclusive society with sustainable peace and development.

To sum up, my delegation would like to leave the Assembly with three key messages.

First, multilateralism and the United Nations in particular, has a great role to play in fostering the quality of our people's lives. The United Nations must take transformative steps to live up to today's reality and expectations. Development programmes, financial and technical assistance, peace operations, security sanctions, resource mobilization, and environmental protection programmes must all truly enhance the quality of life of the people. The work of the United Nations must have real impact on the ground. The United Nations must be able to identify challenges based on the needs and particular situations of each country, and must be able to adapt its work in a responsive and flexible manner. It must also address the root cause of

each problem, especially by addressing structural gaps and focusing more on prevention rather than on curing symptoms.

We look forward to hearing more details on the United Nations development system reform and how it would impact action on the ground, enhance resource efficiency and synergize the work of regional commissions and United Nations country teams. We also wish to hear about innovative resource mobilization and enhanced partnerships with all stakeholders, especially the private sector, academia and civil society. Partnerships, particularly with science, technology and innovation communities, would bring about the transformative push that is required in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Secondly, we must learn to mobilize each of our diverse individual strengths. We must ensure that local wisdom and community knowledge are appreciated and integrated into our efforts. We must create a culture of partnerships that is based on mutual trust and respect. For our part, Thailand recognizes and appreciates the diversity of strengths of each stakeholder. We value the sharing of knowledge and experiences. It is in that spirit that Thailand has launched the sufficiency economy philosophy for the SDGs partnership so as to encourage the sharing of the sufficiency economy philosophy in advancing the SDGs. As part of our efforts to promote South-South cooperation, last year Thailand supported the reopening of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation for Asia and the Pacific in Thailand and has provided human resources to the Office.

Last but not least, focusing on people is not only about working on their external conditions. The first step of a successful transformation is to work on their mindsets, especially those of children and youth. We must not forget them, and their voices must be heard — the future belongs to them. Therefore, we must ensure that children today grow up to become citizens of the world with global mindsets.

Everyone can be an agent of change. If people have a decent life and feel content with what they have, eventually they will want to give and share. Our role as Governments is to support people, create an environment that enables them to be able to give and share, and let people drive change.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Ms. Bishop (Australia): The United Nations was founded in response to the horrors of the Second World War. Nations resolved to prevent a repeat of that catastrophic global conflict. Over the decades since, we have worked together to build an international rules-based order that ensures that disputes can be resolved peacefully and the interests of less powerful nations can be protected from the overt or coercive pressure of more powerful States. That order dictates how nations should behave towards each other. It has supported and enabled the greatest economic expansion in human history. There have been times over the past seven decades when the rules-based order has been under pressure. We are now in a time when the challenges to that order are increasing.

The Security Council is the custodian of international peace and security. Yet the authority of the Council is being challenged, undermined and even ignored. The most egregious example of that is North Korea. The regime of Kim Jong Un is openly defying the Security Council. Its illegal nuclear and missile programmes violate multiple Security Council resolutions. The security of millions of people is at risk as a result of North Korea's refusal to abide by international laws and norms.

The International Monitoring System of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty confirms that North Korea is the only State that is currently testing nuclear weapons, and the only State to do so this century. The Security Council has responded with tough new economic sanctions. It is crucial that all Member States, especially the five permanent members, which have a particular responsibility, strictly implement those sanctions so as to compel North Korea to abandon its illegal programmes.

The authority of the Council must be defended and upheld. Australia will play its part in helping to resolve that crisis. We have already put in place a range of autonomous sanctions beyond those mandated by the Security Council. We will explore further options should North Korea continue its flagrant disregard of the views of the international community, as upheld by the Security Council.

The rules-based order is also being challenged by non-State actors, terrorists and violent extremists. Global terrorism and the extreme Islamist ideologies driving it must be confronted and defeated. Many nations, including Australia, have suffered terrorist

attacks. We can most effectively combat and defeat terrorism if we work together, sharing our knowledge and resources. Our work has continued this week at meetings of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and the United States-led coalition against Da'esh.

The use of chemical weapons presents another serious threat to the rules-based order. We know that they were used in Syria. Australia supports the work of the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in identifying those who deployed such appalling illegal weapons. That work must continue. Australia chairs the 42-member Australia Group, which works to prevent the spread of chemical and biological weapons.

Our rules-based order has been supported by institutions and, over the decades, United Nations peacekeepers have become the defining image of the United Nations response to conflict and security threats. Fifteen peacekeeping missions are currently deployed across four continents. Often, they are the only authority preventing civil breakdown and lawlessness in countries that are already suffering from conflict, poverty and despair.

Australia has been a long-term supporter of United Nations peacekeeping. Last week in Canberra, we commemorated the seventieth anniversary of the first such mission, noting that, in 1947, Australia was the first nation to deploy into the field military observers to monitor the ceasefire in the then Dutch East Indies. We have contributed to 20 more United Nations peacekeeping missions.

We support the work that is under way to ensure that United Nations peacekeepers are better trained, better equipped, more effective and act with greater integrity. Peacekeepers operate in dangerous and unpredictable environments and represent one of the most important global investments in peace and security.

Australia welcomes the new Secretary-General, who has committed to reforming the United Nations in order to make it more effective as the defender and upholder of the rules-based order. Australia fully supports Secretary-General Guterres in that endeavour. The United Nations must focus on conflict prevention, as that is more effective than dealing with the tragic consequences of conflict. United Nations management systems must be made more efficient and accountable. There must be more women in senior positions. In order to achieve reform, Secretary-General Guterres needs the full support of Member States.

The standing of the United Nations is maximized when we work together for the common good. Recent successes prove that to be true, such as the global Arms Trade Treaty, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals. If we are to meet the challenges of our age, we must be guided by a spirit of cooperation and compromise. Central to our task is achieving sustainable and inclusive development. The United Nations must play a more effective and agile role.

The development system of the United Nations should be more focused on sustainable economic development aimed at providing employment opportunities and facilitating partnerships with the private sector. Economic development and security are interlinked. One cannot be achieved without the other. Each country has to find its own model for prosperity and stability. However, there are many lessons to be learned from other nations, and much support is available for nations that are seeking to establish regulatory frameworks, particularly with respect to supporting private investment that helps economies to grow and generates employment. Economic resilience can also be undermined by natural and man-made disasters.

With the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Declaration and the World Humanitarian Summit's grand bargain, there is a blueprint for global action that addresses the problems that can be addressed only by working together on the challenges we face, which do not respect national borders. That includes climate change, diseases, including malaria, the management of our precious water resources, and modern slavery. It is an unpalatable truth that forced labour, child labour, human trafficking and modern slavery are rampant in the world. Australia has strongly committed to working with the international community to urgently address those egregious crimes. Last month, Australia and Indonesia jointly launched the world's first regional business-Government partnership aimed at addressing modern slavery, and we have continued our advocacy on that issue with other nations this week. We will end such abhorrent practices. I want to pay tribute to Andrew, Nicola and Grace Forest for starting the Walk Free Foundation and inspiring our work.

Australia is a strong supporter of the Paris Agreement, and here at the United Nations we have voiced our support, specifically on risk mitigation for coral reefs, which are among the most valuable environments on our planet. They support more biodiversity than almost any other ecosystem, are vital to the world's fisheries, protect our coastlines and generate significant tourist revenue. Coral reefs sequester four times more carbon than forests and are a vital element in our global efforts to reduce emissions. Worldwide, more than 30 coral reefs are listed as World Heritage Sites, and 29 are under stress. As the custodians of the Great Barrier Reef and with our extensive experience in reef management, we seek to bring our expertise to other locations. We hope to serve on the World Heritage Committee next year.

Australia has worked with other countries on each of those issues during the past week. We are mindful that no matter how much we work on building strong, resilient societies, crises will still occur. Australia has been a strong contributor to relief efforts in Iraq and Syria, as well as in South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, where there are significant numbers of displaced people at increasing risk of famine. Australia is also supporting those displaced by conflict in Rakhine state, Myanmar. We are contributing to funding life-saving food for up to 300,000 people.

Australia also seeks to serve, for the first time, on the Human Rights Council, starting in 2018. I am grateful for the strong support from so many countries for our candidacy. If elected, we will be a principled and pragmatic member of the Council. Australia would be the first nation from the South-West Pacific on the Council. We will promote an agenda relevant both to our region and to the planet. Empowering women and girls so that they can reach their full potential lifts a country's productivity and underpins stability. We will support the freedom of expression. The number of journalists and human rights defenders detained, abused or killed each year should be of grave concern to us all. We will support good governance and strong democratic institutions. Similarly, we will promote strong, independent national human rights institutions in order to raise awareness of human rights, address violations and hold to account those responsible for abuses.

Australia is proud to be the home of the world's oldest continuous culture, and we will strive to advance the human rights of indigenous peoples around the globe. Australia reaffirms its commitment to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We will also work with other members to enhance the effectiveness of the Human Rights Council, so that its work can make a meaningful difference to the lives of individuals around the world. The Council must remain relevant to the broader international agenda, while making a contribution to building stable, prosperous and compassionate societies.

We all strive for an environment in which countries can grow and prosper and in which individuals can aspire to a life unburdened by the threat of violence, an environment driven by a shared vision of peace, compassion and community. For its part, Australia will work with others to protect an international order that ensures that all States can pursue their interests securely and supports cooperative responses to global challenges.

The United Nations can become an even more powerful force for stability in an uncertain world. It can live up to the ideals and universal principles on which it was founded. The people of our world expect the Organization to inspire the best in human nature, and that is our duty.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

Mr. Szijjártó (Hungary): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. For those of us from Central Europe, it is highly significant that a Central European candidate was elected to such an important position. It shows that Central Europe is a strong region that has attained success through policies that are based on rationality and common sense. His election, along with the fact that Poland was elected to the Security Council as a non-permanent member, serves as proof that the Visegrad Group is strong and capable of speaking with a loud, united voice.

Now, as we convene at the General Assembly, it is evident that we are living in extremely challenging times. Economic, political, defence and military relations are changing extremely rapidly. Coming from Central Europe, I would like to highlight three very important issues from our perspective: migration and the threat of terrorism, the relationship between the East and the West, and the rights of national minorities.

Europe currently finds itself on the front lines of significant global changes. Since the end of the Cold War, Europe has never had to face as many challenges as it does now. As a result of the migration crisis, Europe is facing the most serious threat of terrorism in its history. The European Union is facing its toughest challenges since its foundation. Western Europe used to be the most secure, safest and most peaceful region globally. A couple of years ago, we watched the news on television about terror in the Middle East, and we were sure that such events would surely never take place in Europe. To the contrary, the fear of terrorist attacks has become a part of everyday life. Between 2015 and 2017, Europe suffered 30 major terror attacks, which took 300 innocent lives. Churches, airports, beaches and concerts have become sites for execution, which can take place within a couple of seconds. That development is a direct consequence of two phenomena.

The first is the massive influx of illegal migrants. During the past two and a half years, 1.5 million illegal migrants have entered European Union territory without any kind of control, checks or regulation. That has definitely provided an opportunity for terrorist organizations to take advantage of that flow and send their terrorists and fighters to the European continent.

Secondly — and here I will surely offend some by breaking taboos and challenging dogma — we must admit that the earlier social integration procedures in the Western part of Europe have failed. Some of the attempts to integrate migrants who arrived in Europe previously have been totally unsuccessful and, in many places in Western Europe, parallel societies have been constructed.

We must honestly admit that we are shocked, after the barbaric terrorist attacks in Europe, the massive violations of national and international laws and regulations, and the loss of thousands of lives on the Mediterranean Sea and elsewhere, that there are still leaders of international organizations and representatives of powerful countries who claim forcefully that migration is a favourable phenomenon that is to be encouraged. That is extremely irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour. Encouraging waves of migrants endangers tens of thousands of people — there are those who risk their lives to reach a place where they think they might find a better way of life, and those who are put at risk of becoming victims of the terrorists who seek to take advantage of those migratory waves.

Hungary's position is quite clear. All States have the fundamental right and responsibility to ensure the security of their own people, all States have the fundamental right and responsibility to protect their own borders, and all States have the fundamental right and responsibility to make decisions on their own — including as to whom they allow to enter their territory and whom they do not.

Hungary has made enormous efforts to comply with its international obligations. We have spent €800 million on protecting not only ourselves and the border of Hungary but also the external border of the European Union and the external border of the Schengen Area. We have also built physical infrastructure and mobilized human resources. Again, altogether that has cost €800 million.

I must remind the Assembly that this is not the first time in history that we have had to protect the Western part of Europe as well as ourselves. But of course, as we are a Christian country, we accept our responsibility to help those in need. Hungary's principle is to provide help when it is needed, and that is why we help and assist Christian communities in the Middle East so that they can stay or return once conflicts are over.

We have spent almost €2 million rebuilding 200 houses in the Iraqi township of Telsqof, making it possible for more than 1,300 people to return. We have spent €4 million on building schools, covering medical expenses and ensuring that Christian communities are able to stay and flourish. We offer 100 scholarships on an annual basis to youngsters whose families are being persecuted in the region.

We understand that the rights of people should be restored when they have been violated. We must work to help people stay as close to their homes as possible, and we have to help people return to their homes as soon as possible. We call for more support for countries that have taken care of refugees from war-torn areas, such as Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and the Kurdish region of Iraq. However, we are all aware that a complete and definitive solution for the migration crisis can emerge only by tackling the root causes, which includes overcoming military conflicts beyond Europe's borders and eliminating terrorist organizations.

I would like to turn now to my second point, namely, the relationship between the East and the West. I represent a small Central European country, and we are all aware that major international conflicts can

be resolved through agreements between the super-Powers of the West and the East. This is why pragmatic cooperation between East and West is necessary if we wish to eliminate the most dangerous terrorist groups worldwide. Hungary is therefore proud to contribute 200 troops to the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham.

Cooperation between the East and the West is necessary if we wish to overcome the war and create peace in Syria, thereby making it possible for people to return and in order to decrease the migratory pressure on Europe. It is necessary to create peace in Libya and ensure stability there for the future. It is also necessary to address the extraordinary challenge posed by a communist dictator who is threatening the world with a nuclear programme, violating all possible international regulations and values.

We Central Europeans read this from history: whenever there is a conflict between the East and the West, Central Europe will certainly lose out. We do not want to be losers anymore. That is why we call for a better and more pragmatic relationship and cooperation between the East and the West based on mutual trust and respect for each other and for international law.

In my third, and final, point from a Central European angle, I would like to highlight the importance of the rights of national minorities, which is a highly sensitive issue for Hungary, as millions of Hungarians live outside our borders. The rights of national minorities are among the most highly protected in international relations. There is an international consensus — we believe, at least — that the rights of national minorities must be respected by all members of the international community, and discrimination against any kind of minority is simply unacceptable.

One of the most important elements of national minority rights is the right to use and receive education in one's mother tongue. Why is that so important? Because the best way to create difficulties for national minorities is to prohibit them from using their native language by law. It is not an accident that language rights are also enshrined in a variety of guiding documents and international standards on the matter, such as the 1992 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the three principles on language and education of UNESCO and the various recommendations of the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues on the implementation of the the Declaration. Those documents describe a similar basic approach for State authorities to meet their human rights obligations involving language.

Unfortunately, the Parliament of Ukraine adopted a new law on education on 5 September. That new law drastically curbs the already acquired level of minority rights in education and language use. The new law takes away the right to receive an education in their mother tongue from all children older than 10. It is a shame that we are seeing that kind of legislation adopted in the twenty-first century in a country that is making great efforts to make quick progress on the economic integration process of its Association Agreement with the European Union. That law clearly discriminates against the minorities living in Ukraine.

Article 1 of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education clearly states that,

> "[t]he term 'discrimination' includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education".

It is obvious that the new Ukrainian law on education clearly violates those United Nations conventions and international norms. We therefore stress that it would establish a very dangerous precedent if the United Nations were not to act and remained silent in that regard. We strongly urge the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to begin investigating the new Ukrainian law on education and use all the means at his disposal to address the serious violations of fundamental minority rights brought on by the new Ukrainian law.

Hungary will always stand by Hungarian communities, regardless where they live in the world, and we will never let them down. That is our obligation. That is our responsibility, and it comes from our heart, as well.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdelkader Messahel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

Mr. Messahel (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav

Lajčák on his election to the presidency to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We assure him of my country's full support. I would also like to express my appreciation and gratitude to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, Foreign Minister of Fiji. I thank him for the excellent work that he performed during the past session

At each session of the General Assembly, we repeat our diagnosis of the miserable state of the world. Unfortunately, this session is no exception, given that it is being held in a context in which protracted crises continue, new and bloody conflicts are breaking out and hotspots are waiting for settlements that are harder to achieve than ever before. Our time is also marked by the fragile ecological balance of the planet owing to all of the damage that it has incurred. We add to that extreme poverty, backwardness and diseases that continue to kill millions, as well as threats spreading across borders, such as terrorism and the associated organized crime, which directly affect the safety and stability of our countries.

The challenges that we face cannot be underestimated, nor can they be ignored. In every situation, we must not doubt our ability to confront those challenges and overcome them. In the words of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, which he shared with the General Assembly as President at its twenty-ninth session in 1974:

> "[o]ur responsibility is less to turn our backs on reality than, rather, to face up to it rigorously and vigilantly". (*A/PV.2233, para. 27*)

Despite the fact that the United Nations can be improved in more than one area, it remains the only crucial means at nations' disposal and has been described by President Bouteflika as representing a monument of harmony and solidarity among all the nations of the world.

I would like to express our satisfaction with the topic of this year's session, namely, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", which powerfully encapsulates the challenges that we are facing today. In confronting numerous crises, hotspots and the terrible human tragedies that they leave in their wake, we can only question our collective conscience over the deep-rooted causes that have led to the failure of the collective security system that was designed by the founding fathers of our Organization as a fortress that would forever protect future generations from the scourge of war. We must therefore work in unison to reform the Organization so that it can fully shoulder the responsibilities that it was established to assume, whether in terms of preventing conflict, promoting peace or respecting human rights, or in realizing the right to self-determination.

The time has come to implement a fundamental reform for the Organization, including its structure and management, and, in the reform process, we must primarily focus on the Security Council as a starting point. We must remedy the historical injustice embodied in the absence of African representation in both categories of membership of that organ. Membership must be expanded so that it represents the important actors in the international arena.

I believe that there is also growing consensus on the need to revitalize and strengthen the authority of the General Assembly, which for the first time has interacted directly and innovatively in the process of the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General, thereby confirming its trust in him and his legitimacy to fulfil his mandate. That selection was unanimous. The appointment of Mr. Guterres, whose personal and professional characteristics we admire, was unanimous, which confirms the appropriateness of the new procedure.

Algeria remains committed to certain basic foreign-policy principles that are derived from the Charter of the United Nations, namely, respect for the independence and territorial integrity of States, non-intervention in other countries' internal affairs, the peaceful settlement of conflicts and the right to self-determination. Algeria will continue to act in accordance with those principles and will always support political rather than military solutions in the settlement of conflicts, be they in Syria, Yemen, Mali, Libya or elsewhere.

With regard to two of its neighbours, Algeria is convinced that the people of Mali must choose dialogue and negotiations if the country is to overcome the difficulties that lie in the path of implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. In order for Libyans to preserve their unity and territorial integrity, it is crucial that they settle their differences under the supervision of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, with the support of neighbouring countries. On the other hand, we in Algeria believe that the Western Sahara issue is a matter of decolonization, which falls within the purview of the United Nations. Accordingly, we believe that there can be no viable

solution if the people of Western Sahara are not able to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination. In that regard, Algeria hopes that the appointment of Mr. Horst Köhler as United Nations Personal Envoy for Western Sahara will help to bring about the resumption of negotiations between the two sides to the conflict, namely, the Kingdom of Morocco and Frente Polisario, and assist in moving the country along the path towards decolonization, in accordance with the principles of international legitimacy and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Algeria would like once again to express its regret over the inability of the international community to put an end to Israel's occupation of Arab territories. We reiterate our support for the Palestinian people as they strive to regain their legitimate national rights and establish their independent State with Al-Quds as its capital.

Combating terrorism and violent extremism, which is a source of terrorism, unfortunately remains a priority on the international agenda. The terrorist threat has been far-reaching in nature and continues to be so. We are reminded of that fact by the tragedies caused by the numerous terrorist attacks in the Middle East and Sahel regions, not to mention the long list of such attacks perpetrated this year in other parts of the world. Extremism is spreading at an ever-faster rate owing to the emergence of the Internet and social networking sites. The Organization's strategy for combating violent extremism must therefore take that reality into account. It must also prompt countries to combat the spread of Islamophobia at the individual and collective levels.

We also note that the repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters requires the international community to mobilize greater efforts to counter the dangerous threats that they bring back to their countries of origin. Algeria is fully aware of the dangers of terrorism and transborder organized crime in its immediate vicinity. Algeria maintains the highest degree of caution internally and on its borders, thereby enhancing its commitment to combating those phenomena at the regional and international levels.

Algeria's experiences have been recorded in two published collections, one of which pertains to democracy and the role of national reconciliation in combating terrorism and violent extremism. The evolving nature of migration, be it legal or illegal, will inevitably offer opportunities to benefit our economies and societies. However, some forms of migration cause extreme harm to those involved, as well as to the countries connected with the phenomenon.

By virtue of its geographical location, Algeria is at the forefront in dealing with unregulated migration. In the past, Algeria was a country of origin and a transit country, but today Algeria is a destination country for such human flows. As a result, it understands the complex nature of the issue. We believe that it is important to continue to work together to find comprehensive, integrated and balanced solutions based on a fair division of responsibilities, with a view to preserving the dignity of those who have been forced by fear or poverty to take the dangerous road of migration, exposing themselves to the risk of abuse by organized transborder criminal gangs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development have offered some important gains, and we must mobilize all ways and means to fulfil and preserve them. We believe that we have an excellent tool in our hands, namely, the United Nations Development Programme and related entities, for helping developing States to formulate policy and undertake domestic development efforts.

Before I conclude, I would like to inform the General Assembly of some of the domestic activities that Algeria has been undertaking.

Pursuant to the directives of the President of the Republic, in July 2016 we adopted a new development plan that aims to expand our emerging national economy with an eye on the 2030 horizon. The plan involves the rational management of financial resources so that the gains achieved through social justice and national cohesion may be preserved. In that regard, Algeria has committed itself to implementing Agenda 2030 by mobilizing national efforts and taking advantage of the capacities of all partners, including civil society. Those efforts, which involve all sectors, seek to diversify the national economy and achieve sustainable development.

Having realized the need to enhance the rights and independence of women and in the light of the attention that the United Nations gives to those issues, I would like to reiterate Algeria's commitment to the subject of women's rights. The Algerian Constitution was amended in 2016 to enshrine that deliberate approach, and that has been reflected in the improved situation of women in rural areas, in local councils,

in both chambers of Parliament, as well as in the top positions in the State. That won Algeria an award from the African Union in 2016, as part of its Human Rights Decade. Algeria received another award in 2017 in the area of enhancing the rights of women.

Youth constitute three quarters of the population and are considered another major priority of the Algerian State, which, in a constitutional amendment, established a High Council for Youth. Moreover, Algeria has for years been working hard to take advantage of that important human resource, which is of such socioeconomic importance. The educational sector has also witnessed important efforts by Government authorities to offer education to youth, that important part of society.

Algeria has been ranked third in Africa and first in the Maghreb area in human development.

It is also worth mentioning that in August Gallup Inc., an international institute for opinion polls, ranked Algeria sixth on its list of safest countries in the world.

Those are the points that I wanted to leave with the membership on behalf of Algeria as we commence our work at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Amina Chawahir Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Kenya.

Ms. Mohamed (Kenya): I am delighted to address the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I convey to all warm greetings and best wishes from the President of the Republic of Kenya, His Excellency Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, whom I have the honour to represent here today. The President is committed to the agenda of this session and its overall objectives.

I congratulate the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his participation for the first time in the General Assembly as Secretary-General. I would say to him that I am encouraged by his commitment to empower the world's women and girls, because, as he said,

> "Parity at the United Nations will improve performance at the United Nations". (*A/72/PV.1, p.3*)

He can count on Kenya's support for that commitment.

The world faces enormous challenges ranging from poverty, global terrorism, climate change, conflicts and inequality, to the unfolding threats to the liberal order that have governed the world in the post-war era. At stake in all those challenges is the well-being of the people, the vast majority of whom are suffering the brunt of those challenges and whose livelihoods are becoming increasingly uncertain. Describing the state of the world at the time of the Industrial Revolution, the English writer Charles Dickens said: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." That is still an apt way of describing the state of the world today with all of its challenges and opportunities.

Kenya welcomes the theme of the seventy-second session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". Kenya agrees with and supports the priorities for action that the President has outlined to guide the focus on people, namely, peace and conflict prevention; migration; the Sustainable Development Goals; climate action; and human rights. Those priorities are urgent and deserve the attention not only of Governments but also of the private sector and civil society. Kenya acknowledges the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals as an appropriate response to the pressing challenges that we face today. We played a key role in the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals as co-Chair of the Open Working Group, and we remain committed to translating that transformative agenda into tangible action for our people without leaving any one behind.

However, we recognize that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will be as much about the effectiveness of development cooperation as it will be about the scale and form such cooperation actually takes. There is a lot of talk about partnerships today, but not enough of the practical, on-the-ground support needed to make partnerships effective in practice. As a country, we have stepped up efforts to achieve the Sustainable Develop nent Goals. In the health sector, for example, our Government now offers free maternal health-care services across our country. We next intend to cover health-care services for women, children and adolescents. Confirming that commitment two years ago, President Kenyatta said:

> "I pledge to take the needed sustainable actions to end all preventable deaths of women, children and

adolescents within a generation and ensure their well-being, and we hold ourselves accountable for our collective progress towards that goal."

Together with the United Nations family in Kenya, we have also established a Sustainable Development Goal partnership platform that seeks to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Kenya. The platform brings together the Government, development partners, the private sector, civil society and the United Nations. The platform has created diverse Sustainable Development Goal accelerator windows, of which primary health care has been the first. That partnership has resulted in a drastic reduction in maternal and child deaths. We intend to transform primary care to pave the way for universal health coverage for all of 46 million Kenyans by 2021, thereby ensuring, as we pledged, that no one is left behind.

Climate change in our region is disrupting the livelihoods of millions of people and generating conflicts over dwindling resources, especially land and water. Climate change today costs Kenya's economy approximately 3 per cent in gross domestic product annually. Kenya has enacted legislation to implement the Paris Agreement in order to address that problem. We have committed to a 30 per cent reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions by 2030, relative to the business-as-usual scenario, and subject to the necessary financing, technology transfer and capacity-building, as agreed in Paris. The capacity of our planet to sustain life is under threat, and the need to address climate change is not a choice; it is an urgent imperative.

We commend the United Nations for the steps that have been taken to strengthen and upgrade the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in accordance with the Rio +20 Declaration. We welcome the step towards universal membership and the efforts to enhance the financing and ability of UNEP to fulfil its unique coordination mandate within the United Nations system. I am happy to say that, since its establishment, the United Nations Environment Assembly has helped the world refocus on the environment. Through the work of the Assembly, which is now the de facto world parliament for the environment, decisions that contribute to the well-being of our planet are now being universally respected.

I call upon the States Members of the United Nations to strengthen UNEP so that it can effectively respond to global environmental challenges. In that regard, Kenya insists on the implementation of the decision by Heads of State, now enshrined in the Rio Declaration, to consolidate the headquarters functions of UNEP in Nairobi at its headquarters in Kenya. That matter is of grave concern and continues not to receive the attention it deserves. The importance of having UNEP in Kenya, which lies in the global South, cannot be overemphasized.

Kenya welcomes the creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and looks forward to robust and productive engagement with it. We expect the Office to support all other United Nations bodies in developing initiatives that are responsive to the efforts of Member States. Our priorities are targeted counter-engagement in radicalization clusters, the disengagement of defectors, strengthening intelligence and law enforcement, and deploying whole-of-Government approaches and socioeconomic tools in line with a global strategy.

My delegation supports the Secretary-General's commitment to the reform agenda of the United Nations. The United Nations must embrace reforms in order to adjust to the global landscape of the twenty-first century and be more accommodative, more democratic and more effective in order to be fit for purpose for our modern world. Of particular concern to Africa is the fact that the Security Council continues to be dominated by a small club of countries, which totally excludes the rest of us. That exclusion continues to undermine the legitimacy and efficiency of the Security Council, while its operations, on the other hand, raise issues of accountability and transparency. Therefore, it is imperative that the United Nations embrace reforms on all of the five core areas that have been identified. We call for Africa's representation in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of the Security Council, as stated in the African Common Position.

Early in September, we held a high-level meeting to discuss best practices in relation to implementation of the New Urban Agenda, as well as measures to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and financial capability of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). At the meeting, Member States committed to engaging in the UN-HABITAT process. They called for better coordination of urban matters across the entire United Nations system and for an urban assembly to replace the 58-member Governing Council at its headquarters in Nairobi. We welcome

the confidence that the membership has expressed in our country.

It is no secret that UN-HABITAT is among the least-funded agencies of the United Nations. The Assembly needs an adequate budget in order to enable it to effectively carry out its mandate. Kenya looks forward to engaging constructively in the follow-up discussions in the Second Committee during the current session of the General Assembly.

Kenya has played a prominent role in the search for peace and security in various countries, especially in Somalia and South Sudan. Thanks to our collective efforts as an international community, tremendous progress has been made in Somalia. In particular, the credible elections that took place last year and the formation of a broad-based Government marked a watershed moment that laid the foundation for a stable, democratic transition in Somalia. In order to consolidate the gains already made and prevent a relapse into conflict, we support the strengthening of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). We also welcome Security Council resolution 2372 (2017), which extends AMISOM with revised core tasks.

We urge the United Nations to give greater support to the Mission, particularly in terms of sustained funding, in order to enable it to deal with major security threats ahead of the envisaged troop drawdown. Furthermore, we strongly believe that support of the reconstruction process, including enabling the Government to provide basic services, will improve confidence and help prevent conflict in Somalia in the future.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains of concern and needs urgent attention. We urge the international community to provide much-needed resources in order to help save lives that are being ravaged by famine. It is our expectation that the Government of South Sudan will ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers. We also call on the international community to support the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development revitalization process to re-energize the peace process by bringing together all parties to the conflict.

We also remain concerned about the situations in Libya, the Central African Republic, Syria and Iraq. We urge the international community to continue working diligently to ease the challenges that those sisterly nations face. In the same vein, we support the Secretary-General's continued efforts to find a lasting solution for the Palestinian people, based on a two-State solution.

Since the 1960s, Kenya has hosted huge numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries. We have been generous hosts, but lately the presence of refugees has brought attendant challenges. Those challenges include smuggling, banditry, human trafficking and the infiltration of refugee camps by terrorists. In the light of those challenges, the Kenyan Government, together with the Somali Federal Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and without abdicating its responsibility for refugees, signed a tripartite agreement on the voluntary repatriation of refugees in 2013. Although it has been moving slowly, the repatriation process has since been conducted in conformity with international obligations. We expect the international community to join hands with us in supporting the initiative, as it will enable refugees to rebuild their lives and regain their human dignity, away from the squalor of refugee camps.

Kenya welcomes the President's decision to convene a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. As a country, we enacted the Counter Trafficking in Persons Act in 2010, which domesticated the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, including its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. That high-level meeting will provide a much-needed, integrated global platform to increase public awareness, share good practices and address loopholes that aid slavery and trafficking, including ensuring effective border management, capacity-building for immigration officers and the efficient monitoring of local and international employment agencies.

Kenya welcomes the historic adoption on 7 July of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Although nuclear-weapon States are absent, the overwhelming majority of Member States support the Treaty. That demonstrates our concerns about the danger that the use of such weapons poses to humankind, about which we were all reminded by the unfortunate nuclear detonation that took place on 3 September. The adoption of the Treaty gives us renewed hope that it is possible, if we work together, to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Finally, Kenya is a firm believer in multilateralism. We acknowledge the remarkable role that the United Nations has played in sustaining peace in our world and in providing a global platform for cooperation and solidarity among nations. We know that the United Nations can do better. We believe that the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda for Sustainable Development have given the United Nations a blueprint for creating greater peace in our world and for making globalization and development fair and equitable for all. That is the future that we want for ourselves and for future generations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Thórdarson (Iceland): We live in a world of opportunity. Never have we had such potential to end poverty, hunger and violations of human rights, and focus on people striving for a decent life. We can either succeed or we can fail. It is a choice; it is a decision. It is our responsibility and it is our task. This task is not just about numbers or statistics, but real-life people. There is purpose and worth to each and every life. Let us not forget.

Our task is not easy. But the most important things in life are never easy. The right path is always difficult, and we definitely face difficulties. The consequences of climate change, bad governance, terrorism and conflict have made our world seem more dangerous, less predictable and more chaotic, as our Secretary-General has put it. It is our common responsibility to safeguard the progress we have made since the establishment of this institution and to make good on our promises of prosperity for all.

The world's economic and social progress has, in large part, been driven by science and rational action, based on evidence. We must hold firm to that approach. Only policy, grounded in facts and evidence, can help us deal with such common threats as climate change and create a world that truly reflects our values. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provide the blueprints for our success. Now we must deliver. Droughts, sea-level rise, ocean acidification and other consequences of climate change have wide-ranging implications for all our communities. Climate change is nowhere as visible as in the Arctic, with far-reaching consequences in the other parts of the world. The melting of the polar ice in the North causes higher sea levels in the South. What happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic. In fulfilling our Paris Agreement obligations, we aim to reduce emissions by 40 per cent by 2030 collectively with our European countries. Iceland remains committed to that goal.

Since the establishment of this institution, a rule-based international order has been the foundation for peace and prosperity. The assault on the rule of law by certain Governments undermines the stability of the international system. We condemn in the strongest terms the illegal actions of North Korean leaders and call on them to accept generous offers to return to the negotiating table. During the past weeks, we have at last seen a united Security Council act firmly but constructively to push for dialogue and confidence-building measures, while staying firm on strengthening sanctions in the face of continued provocation.

The use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Government against its own people was a blatant violation of international and humanitarian laws and demanded a firm response by the international community. Complex internal conflicts have led to displacement and suffering on a massive scale, with famine looming in many areas, including Yemen. The issue of Western Sahara remains unresolved with tensions rising. The disregard for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine is another serious assault on the international rule-based order.

The Security Council bears primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Along with several other countries, Iceland has encouraged the Security Council to include long-term perspectives in its mission mandates to lay the foundations for lasting peace.

The modern era has also seen the rise of non-State actors — something our system did not plan for. Terrorists have sought to undermine trust and tolerance within and among our communities. Alongside improvements of the United Nations anti-terrorism mechanism, we must identify the drivers of violent extremism and terrorism. At the heart of conflict and violent extremism lies a failure of development. That is where the 2030 Agenda must play a vital role.

The 2030 Agenda is indeed a remarkable achievement. It is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as human rights, peace and development are inseparable and essential to

the successful implementation of the Agenda. I take very seriously the Secretary-General's warning that disregard for human rights is a disease, and it is a disease that is spreading — north, south, east and west.

The violation of freedom of expression, of rights to free assembly, of the fundamental rights of women — all undermine the 2030 Agenda. Extrajudicial killings, repression of minorities and the denial of the right to legitimate opposition set back sustainable development, sometimes by generations. Here I would like to express deep concern at the completely unacceptable situation of the Rohingya population in Myanmar.

Iceland knows first-hand the massive potential that lies in gender equality. With UN-Women as a key partner, Iceland is a dedicated proponent of women's human rights. We actively work to engage men in the fight for gender equality and, indeed, our Prime Minister is a HeForShe IMPACT Champion. We support the United Nations Population Fund and the SheDecides initiative for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and continue to promote women's participation in the peace and security agenda.

I commend the Secretary-General for his commitment to gender equality within the United Nations and his determination in addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and United Nations staff — a betrayal of the civilians under their care and of the values of the United Nations.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Iceland was one the poorest countries in western Europe. Now, we are one of the richest. Why? The answer to that question is the key to our approach to the task at hand of delivering for the people of this world who are striving for a decent life, and making sure that everyone can benefit from this world of ours — the world of opportunities. Iceland's path from rags to riches is a textbook example of the power of free trade. We gained access to large foreign markets where we could sell our products, and by doing so we changed our fortunes.

Every year, we gather here in the capital of free trade and talk about the importance of ending poverty in the world. We can talk the talk, but can we really walk the walk? We can really do something about this. We can open our markets. We can let the poorer countries trade freely with our consumers. Let us trade, and let us keep in mind that free trade is not only the exchange of goods or services for money. Free trade is forming relationships. Free trade is people interacting, travelling and understanding each other, regardless of colour or religion. Free trade is the most powerful tool to establish and maintain peace.

While the markets of the richest countries in the world remain closed to the poorest countries, it is truly our obligation to provide development assistance. A large share of Iceland's bilateral assistance goes to the least developed countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. We focus on our areas of expertise, such as energy and fisheries, while at the same time ensuring a horizontal emphasis on human rights and gender equality.

To share our knowledge and experience, Iceland hosts United Nations University (UNU) programmes on fisheries management, geothermal energy and land restoration, in addition to its UNU gender programme. Through projects and partnerships with the International Renewable Energy Agency, Sustainable Energy for All and the World Bank, Iceland works actively to increase the utilization of sustainable geothermal energy. We also support the work of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to increase food security and mitigate climate change through land restoration.

Continuing a tradition of leadership in oceans affairs, Iceland actively contributed to the United Nations Ocean Conference earlier this year. Our many commitments include reducing marine litter and plastics in the ocean, an issue on which Governments, businesses and individuals must cooperate. Allow me to welcome the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Peter Thomson as his Special Envoy for the Ocean. We look forward to working with Mr. Thomson.

Unlocking the transformative potential of people and the private sector is key to success. In financing for development, we must be clear that development cooperation, while vital, is only a small part of what is needed. Good governance, strong institutions, human rights and equal opportunities are essential to inclusive economic progress, which eventually depends on the political will of leaders. Creating an environment in which doing business is easy and investment makes sense is key to growth.

Iceland strongly believes in the potential of globalization and international trade as an engine for economic growth and poverty reduction. We must continue to promote a universal, rules-based, fair, multilateral trading system under the World Trade

Organization. At the same time, we must be aware of the measures necessary to enable the least developed countries to participate on fair terms. If we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, this is not the time to erect trade barriers.

The dire situation of the 65 million people driven from their homes by conflict, economic hardship and climate change urgently requires a solution. How we, as an international community, address migration will define us for future generations. The forthcoming process towards global compacts for refugees and for safe, orderly and regular migration will give us the opportunity to establish new and comprehensive approaches to that current challenge. Those approaches must be grounded in humanitarian law and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, especially children. As host communities, we should not forget the positive contribution that migrants can make to growth and sustainable development.

Iceland has received an ever-increasing number of refugees, in addition to providing generous assistance to United Nations agencies working in the countries that neighbour Syria. We will continue to do our part. Our forefathers, scarred by the Second World War and economic depression, had the foresight to set up the United Nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Just as this great building was renovated so successfully a few years ago, so too must the United Nations to be made fit for purpose in the modern era. We strongly support the work of the Secretary-General in management reform, development reform and his sustaining peace agenda.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): In 1954, former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld stated that the United Nations was not created to bring us to heaven, but to save us from hell. The need for a United Nations that seeks to save us from humankind's worst impulses remains. However, in these days of uncertainty, we must also learn from and build on what is positive in our world and the United Nations.

In his important address on Tuesday (see A/72/PV.3), our Secretary-General laid out the threats and challenges that we face and how we can overcome them. Delivering a peaceful and prosperous future will depend on collective action. This is the moment for multilateralism, not unilateralism. We must grasp it or risk the consequences. The United Nations is at the centre of that effort. It is a tailor-made space for the world to find solutions to the common challenges of our time. Despite the sometimes justified criticisms, it is clear that we still believe in the power of the United Nations. If we did not, Presidents, Prime Ministers and business and civil-society leaders would not be here this week. I believe that we all recognize that, in the face of global challenges, going it alone is no longer an option.

The United Nations, founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to promote better standards of life in larger freedom, has prevented a repetition of the catastrophic wars that preceded its founding. Extreme poverty has fallen to a historic low. Life expectancy continues to climb. Millions of people are reached every year with life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the sustaining peace agenda are powerful illustrations of what we can achieve together. Those agreements are the strategies for our common future. We must now ensure that the Organization has the structure and the tools needed to support countries to deliver them. The broad support for the Secretary-General's reform agenda illustrates the importance that we attach to an effective United Nations, its role at the centre of multilateralism and as a platform for the delivery of our common commitments. The scope of the reforms being proposed by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General reveals the complex tasks at hand.

The peace and security architecture must better prevent conflicts and sustain peace. The United Nations development system must be radically reoriented to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, to deliver those changes, modern management skills and systems will be essential. More importantly, we must recognize that those reforms cannot be pursued in isolation from one another. People do not experience life in pieces — their needs must be central. Peace and security, economic and social development and the protection and promotion of human rights are mutually reinforcing. As a response, all pillars of the United Nations system and our own bilateral efforts must also be interlinked and mutually reinforcing. That calls for new ways of working and thinking.

Sweden fully subscribes to the principles for reform that were articulated by the Secretary-General: a country-level and people-centred perspective, gender parity, decentralized responsibility and decision-making, and reformed budget procedures. Secretary-General Guterres and Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed have our full support in their efforts.

On our part, we, as Member States, have a responsibility to act coherently, avoid micromanagement and ensure long-term, stable and adequate financing. More flexible funding is necessary. We firmly believe in core and unearmarked funding. We cannot allow ourselves to cherry pick to accommodate domestic interests; that will not give the Organization the stability it needs.

I am proud to say that Sweden will increase its development cooperation budget by approximately $350 million in 2018, bringing our budget to its highest-ever level and delivering on our commitment to devote 1 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance. In addition to words, we will support the Secretary-General's efforts with kronor by making available additional flexible funding for reform.

In the immediate term, faced with record levels of humanitarian need, the humanitarian system requires urgent funding to save lives and end suffering. In the longer term, investing in the 2030 Agenda and the [illegible] agenda will build resilience.

Let me focus now on three specific areas in the spirit of my remarks.

First, nine months ago Sweden joined the Security Council. As the General Assembly elected us to the Council, it is only proper that I report back to its members on what we have been doing on its behalf. Our approach to the Council is simple. While we each come with our own national perspective and will not always agree, as Council members we are bound together by a responsibility to the Charter of the United Nations and the world.

To that end, Sweden works with all members to deliver meaningful outcomes from the Council's discussions. We work closely with the other elected members, which represent the broader membership and bring important perspectives. We are also talking with many members of the Assembly as part of our commitment to speaking with countries on the Council's agenda, not only about them.

Delivering real outcomes for those who need them is a responsibility that goes beyond our national interests. Needs are growing. The number of major conflicts is on the rise. However, as the Secretary-General has said, neither war nor peace is inevitable; they result from the choices that we make. Many of the conflicts on the Council's agenda have come about not because we failed to see them coming — the signs were there — but because we failed to respond early or quickly enough.

Moreover, prevention means not only choosing to heed the warnings when they come, but investing in peaceful societies to avoid the causes of conflicts emerging in the first place. As leaders within our communities and as national leaders, we must choose peace, invest in peace and deliver peace. The United Nations system must be configured to support us.

Sweden has made conflict prevention a central pillar of our Council membership. We have underscored the need for the Council to recognize the primacy of politics in peacekeeping mandates and the need for long-term political strategies that aim to prevent conflict and sustain peace by addressing root causes. I believe we are making progress. That is evidenced by the Council's support for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the Gambia, for the peace process in Colombia and for the transitions in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as its cooperation with the African Union to bring stability to Somalia. As Chair of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Sweden has sought to strengthen the protection of children in conflict zones. The protection of children today prevents conflicts tomorrow.

Nonetheless, we have to do more. The situation in Myanmar is a haunting example of where the root causes of conflict went unresolved, with tragic consequences. It is now urgent that the violence end and that the population be protected, human rights respected and a dignified return allowed. Humanitarian access is essential. Sweden supports the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. We urge the Myanmar Government to implement those recommendations without delay.

In Syria, prevention also failed. The price paid by the country and its citizens has been unimaginable and horrific. Sweden will continue to work through the Council for nationwide humanitarian access and a political solution, which is the only option for long-term peace and a better future for Syria.

In South Sudan, the civilian population has also borne the brunt of a nearly four-year, devastating conflict. I welcome the recent initiatives of South Sudan's neighbours. I urge the Government and all other parties to increase humanitarian access, lay down their arms and engage in a meaningful process to end the conflict.

We continue our long-standing engagement in trying to advance the Middle East peace process. As the Secretary-General said during his recent visit to the region, the two-State solution is the only way forward. Only a negotiated settlement between the parties and an end to the 50 years of occupation can achieve the goal of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. We need to resolve the conflict once and for all. Doing so will have implications for peace that go beyond the Holy Land and the Middle East itself.

Perhaps the greatest threat to international peace and security is the unacceptable and repeated provocations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in pursuit of a nuclear-weapons programme. We call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease further testing, fulfil its international obligations and turn to a path of sincere dialogue on denuclearization. All States must implement the measures that have been decided upon by a united Security Council. Sanctions must be combined with political efforts to pave the way for a peaceful solution. We welcome the Secretary-General's pledge to make his good offices available to that end.

Lasting peace requires the involvement of the entire population, meaning that the full, equal and effective participation of women must be hardwired into all of our efforts towards sustaining peace. That brings me to my second point — women and peace and security.

As a representative of the world's first feminist Government, that issue is close to my heart. From speaking with many members of the Assembly, I realize that I am far from alone in my strong conviction that women's participation in peace and security efforts is essential for sustainable peace. Ensuring women's participation must be at the centre of the United Nations reform efforts.

Sweden is working tirelessly to put the women and peace and security agenda into action in all aspects of the Security Council's work, from including gender reporting in mission mandates, to adding listing criteria for sexual and gender-based violence in sanctions regimes. Sweden's feminist foreign policy is an agenda for change that is aimed at increasing rights, representation and resources for all women and girls, based on the reality of their lives. We urge all countries to form their own feminist policy and ensure that everyone — women, men, boys and girls — is treated equally.

My third and last point regards our common responsibility for global development. The 2030 Agenda provides the pathways to achieve the peaceful, sustainable and equitable societies we want. All countries — rich and poor — share the responsibility of turning that promise into a reality for millions of people around the world. It will not be done by Governments alone. All stakeholders from across society have a part to play. Ensuring that the United Nations development system is transformed to support those efforts will be critical.

Measuring our progress against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be essential, both for decision-making and accountability. Sweden has developed a set of national goals, linked to the SDGs and our national budget, which we are using to measure the development of our society. As we all know, the strength of the 2030 Agenda is in the inherent interlinkages between all 17 Goals. Each Goal is equally important and interdependent. Nonetheless, I would like to highlight two of those Goals.

First, I will address the Goal of reducing inequality. Globalization has opened the world, strengthened economic growth and lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty. However, we have failed to allocate the benefits of globalization equally. We must do better. As part of our contribution, in 2016 Sweden, together with an initial core group of States, businesses and trade unions, launched the Global Deal for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth. The Global Deal is a partnership developed with the International Labour Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with a focus on enhanced social dialogue and sound industrial relations, which are crucial to reducing inequality.

The second Goal I would like to mention is that of healthy oceans and seas. Oceans connect us all. Without water, there is no life. Therefore, the deteriorating condition of our oceans must ring alarm bells for us all. Sweden was pleased to co-host, with Fiji, the Ocean Conference that took place in June. The multi-stakeholder participation and all the commitments

made highlighted the fact that saving the oceans will require all sectors of society to play their part, and that they are ready to do so.

The oceans are also affected by and, in return, affect our climate. We are already seeing the devastating impact of extreme weather events. Climate change will increase the frequency and intensity of such events. Left unchecked, climate change will wash away development gains and increase instability and conflict. To the few who still doubt the overwhelming evidence that climate change is real, I ask: are they really willing to take the chance? Especially when we see that new technologies offer the opportunity to simultaneously reduce emissions and grow economies. Sweden is already proving that is possible and has set a goal of zero net greenhouse emissions by 2045.

All countries must join the effort to achieve the decisive transformations needed to reduce emissions and prevent the worst effects of climate change from happening. With 160 States parties to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change so far, the global commitment remains strong.

In his address on Tuesday, the Secretary-General told us that we must act as one, because only together, as united nations, can we fulfil the promise of the Charter of the United Nations and advance human dignity for all. He is right. The expression "we are all in this together" has perhaps never been so apt. As our world becomes more integrated, so do the challenges and threats we face. We cannot go it alone; we must stand together. Multilateralism is the only path to peace and prosperity.

The meeting rose at 3.05 p.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.17

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

17th plenary meeting
Friday, 22 September 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Brown (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the King of the Kingdom of Tonga.

King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Tupou VI: I would like to congratulate Mr. Lajčák on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure him that the Tonga delegation will fully support his able leadership in revitalizing and enhancing the crucial role of the United Nations. I am grateful to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, a distinguished son of the Pacific islands region, for advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and successfully convening the inaugural Ocean Conference this year. I also commend His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres for his sterling stewardship since he began his first year at the helm of the United Nations. The Tonga delegation will fully support his important reform work.

We send our message of solidarity and sympathy to the people of Mexico and to their families and friends affected by the devastating earthquake, as well as to the millions of people in the Caribbean and all those affected in recent weeks by the ravages of successive hurricanes.

My delegation and I welcome the timely and relevant theme of this year's session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". It essentially emphasizes the peaceful well-being of all people and the conservation and sustainable use of our global resources for present and future generations. What is now crucial is implementation, through sincere partnerships, to collectively achieve the targets, goals and objectives set under international law and the internationally agreed outcomes. In contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the internationally agreed blueprint for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS) and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, Tonga has established a national monitoring mechanism, for which we would like to acknowledge the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2013-2017 will conclude at the end of this year. The five-year programme cycle for 14 Pacific island countries, the United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018-2022, which was signed in August 2017 at the UNDP Pacific Office, will commence after that. The close partnership between the Government of Tonga and the United Nations system for effectively implementing the integrated Tonga strategic development framework and

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the 2030 Agenda is reinforced, through the coordination of United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018-2022, by the United Nations Joint Presence Office delivering as one, led by UNDP in Tonga. It is strategically positioned to provide technical advice to the Government, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.

We also note the Secretary-General's new senior-management appointments and welcome the appointment of the first woman from Tonga and the Pacific islands region to shepherd the important advocacy and facilitation work in the years ahead for the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. We fully support the goal of gender parity, including at all levels in the Organization.

The 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development enabled us to review seven of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 3, on good health and well-being; Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and Goal 14 on the ocean and its resources. We commend the President of the Economic and Social Council for his initiative in devoting adequate time to underscore and examine the complex sustainability challenges facing SIDS, as a special case, and thereby enhancing efforts to implement the commitments called for in the Samoa Pathway. The High-level Political Forum remains an important way to assess the follow-up, monitoring and accountability of commitments to SIDS, which are essentially linked to the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

We fully support Fiji's presidency this year of the twenty-third Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with a view to strongly addressing the adverse impacts of climate change and the urgent need for innovation in adaptation for SIDS. We note the role of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank in making disaster finance and other financial tools available to all SIDS. While we acknowledge their work on expanding the definition of fragility, we urge for further refinement of operational financing decisions so as to include the drivers of vulnerability that the Pacific islands region experiences, particularly natural disasters and adverse economic shocks. We reiterate our call for the appointment of a special representative for climate and security to ensure that the United Nations system has the appropriate tools to respond effectively and efficiently to climate change as an existential threat and a mounting security challenge for SIDS and the entire international community.

Enhanced access to modern and clean sustainable-energy services, energy efficiency and the use of economically viable and environmentally sound technology and research play a critical role in our sustainable development. Mitigation efforts are also essential to overcoming the challenges of excessive dependence on imported fossil fuels. To further strengthen international and regional cooperation, the Pacific Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency was established in Tonga in April. The Centre provides valuable support to Pacific island countries and territories in advancing their various priorities and commitments in achieving sustainable energy and contributing to SDGs 7, 9 and 13. It is a partnership that includes the Pacific Community, the Government of Austria, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the SIDS Sustainable Energy Initiative, among others. The General Assembly acknowledged the Centre at its adoption in July of the biennial resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum" (resolution 71/316).

However, we continue to experience the negative effects of ocean degradation on our livelihoods and culture, owing to anthropogenic activities and the devastating interrelated effects of climate change. We are already actively contributing to the implementation of SDG 14, and look forward to a strong collaboration with all interested parties. This year we hosted an international whaling meeting. Through a far-sighted royal decree in 1978, His Majesty the late King Tupou IV had already banned whaling in Tongan waters four years before the international ban on whale hunting came into effect. That was reaffirmed during the April 2017 international conference on "Whales in a changing ocean" that we were honoured to host.

We may be a small island State, but all small island developing States are large-ocean States. For us and our people, the successful implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 is critical to our pathway towards sustainable development and its interconnection with other goals, such as those related to food security, water and sanitation, health, economic growth, and sustainable production and consumption. We need strong political will for a whole-of-Government

approach to mainstreaming ocean-related actions from international, regional, and national development plans and strategies, in order to ensure the inclusive participation and efforts of all stakeholders, including local communities and the private sector.

Tonga joined the international community in endorsing the call-for-action outcome document (resolution 71/312) of the Ocean Conference in June, which includes almost 1,400 voluntary commitments by stakeholders, including eight from Tonga. It is a foundation for the development of a blue economy or "blue charter", as proposed by the Commonwealth secretariat. It is urgent that we begin working to develop practical guidelines and toolkits to assist States in delivering on all the targets under Goal 14 in an integrated manner.

We acknowledge the completion of the work of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292 on the development of a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Tonga maintains its support for the commencement of an intergovernmental conference to initiate negotiations on a substantive text as soon as possible. We embrace the ongoing work of the International Seabed Authority in its administration and management of resources in that area in accordance with the common heritage of mankind. Tonga congratulates the Secretary-General of the Authority in his first year in office as he works with member States to develop important exploitation regulations, which must strike the appropriate balance between conservation of the natural environment in which mineral resources exist and its sustainable use. The consultations must be transparent and inclusive if such a balance is to be achieved.

Tonga continues its engagement as a member State of the Authority and will seek re-election to the Council at the Authority's twenty-fourth session in 2018. A Tongan national, together with other members of the Legal and Technical Commission, provides expert views for facilitating the work of the Commission in developing an important financial mechanism for ensuring the fair and equitable distribution of returns from seabed mining.

Tonga reiterates the call made under the Samoa Pathway for genuine and durable partnerships that can help to ensure that no one is left behind. A very credible partnership mechanism between the 12 Pacific SIDS and Italy, Austria, Luxembourg and Spain is exemplified through the Joint Committee. It has been ably co-chaired by Italy and the Chair of the Pacific SIDS every year since 2006. Tonga has therefore benefited thanks to projects related to renewable energy, water, the strengthening of young Government officials' capacities and, more recently, protected maritime areas.

We welcome the establishment of the India-United Nations Development Fund through the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, which launched a project implemented by UNDP for establishing early warning systems in Tonga and other Pacific island countries. The system relies on the timely provision of disaster-risk information, guidance on how to act on warnings and ensuring a constant state of preparedness. Sustainable development is possible where there is peace and security, and sustainable development is key to peace and security.

Finally, we urge all leaders to focus and reflect on the best ways to ensure that their power and legitimacy can benefit their own people and the entire world. We appeal for a speedy resolution to the current tensions on the Korean peninsula, which are affecting global peace and security. I congratulate the Secretary-General on the recent establishment of the High-level Advisory Board for Mediation, designed to advise him on specific initiatives and related efforts around the world.

May Almighty God guide and bless the President of the General Assembly, all the States Members of the United Nations and their respective Governments and peoples.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the King of the Kingdom of Tonga for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sogavare (Solomon Islands): I would like to add to those of others the congratulations of my delegation to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. His great experience and wisdom as a diplomat will guide our work going forward in this session. I assure him that for its part, my delegation will try to lighten his burden by providing him with full cooperation throughout the proceedings of the Assembly.

With regard to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, what can I say? Not only was he the first Fijian to hold the office of President of the General Assembly, he was also the first Pacific islander to assume that prestigious office. Among his many achievements was his championing of the 1,350 voluntary commitments made at the Ocean Conference held here in June. I thank him for a marvellous job done.

Our world is going through difficult times. The year 2017 has been dominated by intentional provocations and natural disasters. As such, the choice of our theme — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is not only appropriate, it is perfectly timed. On that note, on behalf of the people of Solomon Islands, I extend our heartfelt sympathies to those affected by the recent natural disasters, in particular Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. We would like to express our sympathies to the families who lost loved ones in the recent earthquakes in Mexico. Whether we are talking about tsunamis, cyclones, flooding or earthquakes, Solomon Islands knows well the pain of having to live through such ordeals. Our hearts and prayers are with the victims.

I believe that the theme can effectively be summed up in three simple yet powerful words — peace, humanity and equality. However, I am afraid that the status quo in the world today does not reflect them. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, approximately 65.6 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced at the end of last year. Those statistics are the result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations — the consequences of human actions. Sadly, the majority of the displaced are women and children. They are the most vulnerable to the evil designs of their fellow human beings. They must therefore be protected. The protection of people is in the DNA of the Organization. My Government therefore reaffirms its support for the responsibility to protect. The international community must continue to stand firm in its fight to prevent crimes against humanity.

I stand here with pride in saying that today we in the Pacific continue to enjoy the world's most peaceful corner. Although we play a minor role in the geopolitics of the world, we are now once again caught up in the midst of a global power play. History shows that global events have often dictated those in the Pacific region. They were events beyond our control that were imposed on us. They have had lasting effects on our peoples, many of them negative. From bygone world wars to nuclear tests, to the current instances of military provocation, we continue to deal with the remnants of those foreign-imposed events.

For us in Solomon Islands, it was only a month ago that we celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of Guadalcanal, a significant battle of the Second World War. For many, that war ended in 1945, but for us its repercussions continue. Between 2011 and 2017, approximately 37,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance, weighing some 152,000 metric tons, were destroyed. I thank the Governments of Australia and the United States of America for their assistance in that exercise, which continues today.

Today, we are also continually threatened by global power posturing attempting once again to dictate our fate as a region. However, we refuse to remain silent. It is on that note that I would like to register our strongest condemnation of the actions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We too would like to echo the global call to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions. The recent testing of ballistic missiles by the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea over the Pacific Ocean is an insult to the people of the Pacific. We are ocean people. The sea is our sanctuary. It is the foundation of our heritage and where our people source their food and income. We therefore denounce any pollution or contamination of the ocean that our Pacific peoples depend on for their livelihoods.

As the Assembly is well aware, we in the Pacific supply approximately 60 per cent of the world's tuna market, underscoring our region's global significance. Maintaining the health of our ocean is therefore not merely in our own interests. The maintenance of our ocean, given its importance to global food security, should be in all of our interests. In that regard, Solomon Islands reaffirms the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the peaceful use of ocean spaces.

While the threat of nuclear warfare is a genuine concern to us all, for our small island developing States the effects of climate change that we are currently witnessing at an alarming rate on our shores present a clear and present danger. The concentration of carbon dioxide in our oceans now stands at 400 parts per million. It has passed the safe level of 350 parts per million and at 550 parts per million will soon begin to dissolve our corals. For Pacific nations like ours, climate change continues to be our enemy. We are constantly invaded by that enemy, every day. In Solomon Islands, we have lost six islands to the effects of climate change. What was once a playground for children is now inundated with water. For many of our peoples, talk of a sustainable world is becoming increasingly unattainable. We are in survival mode.

The horrors of the impact of a nuclear attack are undeniable, but the slow onset of tragedy caused by the adverse impact of climate change is just as cruel. If it has not happened yet, it will shortly. An unstable climate and people's subsequent displacement and relocation can exacerbate some of the core drivers of conflict, such as migratory pressures, the clash of cultures and competition for resources. Those are threats to humankind's very existence and could very well morph into threats to global peace and security. That is why the Pacific small island developing States have been requesting that the Security Council also address the issue of climate change.

While useful, the building of sea walls and wave-breakers to mitigate some of the effects of climate change is a mere Band-Aid solution. We call on all major greenhouse-gas emitters to meet their national determined contributions for reducing emissions. We strongly urge the United States of America to reconsider its position on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Let us all stand together in solidarity to face the defining challenges of our time. With regard to the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, Solomon Islands pledges its full support to Fiji as Chair. As a fellow Pacific island country, we congratulate Fiji on its upcoming assumption of the chairship and look forward to discussions on effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Regarding peace and security, Solomon Islands has contributed a contingent of five police officers who have just completed their 12-month tour of duty in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, in our first humble contribution to the maintenance of world peace. Another eight police officers, two of whom are women, are all set to go as soon as they secure their visas for the Sudan. The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur was set up to protect civilians in areas where militia groups continue to be active and intercommunal violence still occurs. The efforts could be made more effective if the United Nations Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes could be integrated into predeployment and in-theatre training for all peacekeepers.

The mandate of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands ended on 30 June. On behalf of the people of Solomon Islands, I would like to sincerely thank members of the Pacific Islands Forum for coming to our aid to save us from ourselves. At this juncture, I would like to pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Mission and to thank their families for their loved ones' services. I am also deeply grateful to Australia and New Zealand for their excellent leadership role in the Assistance Mission, which was premised on a regional security framework, the Biketawa Declaration. My Government is also very supportive of the Pacific islands leaders' communiqué from the forty-eighth Forum meeting, which calls for a comprehensive expansion and updating of the Declaration. We believe that a Biketawa-plus that takes into consideration the security challenges the region faces today, as well as our collective responses to them, will help to keeping the Pacific islands region peaceful.

Like other post-conflict countries, Solomon Islands will continue to face many challenges.

Sustainable peace will require more than just effective policing or a functioning public service. It will require social and economic development initiatives that address the underlying causes of the conflict. In that regard, I must thank the Peacebuilding Commission for facilitating our national dialogue on peace and sustainable development. The communiqué from that dialogue shows an inclusive and clear consensus on our priorities for sustaining peace. I therefore look forward to Solomon Islands being formally declared eligible for peacebuilding support from the Peacebuilding Recovery Facility.

I must also thank the Board of the Green Climate Fund for approving $86 million for the Tina River Hydro Project when it met in South Korea early this year. The project will create more than 200 jobs and offset more than 44,000 tons of carbon dioxide per annum in diesel emissions. It will also provide renewable energy, at a more affordable cost, to more than 100,000 people in and around our capital city of Honiara.

I currently have an issue with the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the joint submission by Papua New Guinea, the Federated States of Micronesia and Solomon Islands concerning the Ontong Java plateau. Solomon Islands notes with serious concern that the Commission, in its deliberations, has overturned the understanding that we had reached with the Sub-Commission on the connection of Duff and Anuta Islands to the continental margin of the Ontong Java plateau. The Sub-Commission and our joint delegation reached mutually acceptable conclusions that were the result of comprehensive interactions over two years. However, we were not given the opportunity to address the amendments proposed by the Commission, despite their serious implications for our submission, nor were we given the reasons for the amendments despite our repeated requests. We therefore have no option but to consider making a revised submission.

A related issue is the negotiations on an implementing agreement under the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdictions. The current negotiations undermine the fundamental principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and are grossly inadequate when addressing the principle of adjacency, the integration of traditional knowledge, and transboundary and cumulative impacts as they relate to small island developing States. There must also be some recognition for a funding mechanism that can adequately support the implementation of the proposed instrument.

The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations speaks powerfully of our mission to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. This language clearly articulates the principle of universality for all peoples and nations, regardless of their size or population.

However, as we in the Assembly speak of leaving no one behind, we are at the same time shutting the door for the people of Taiwan in participating in this universal process. We are thereby contradicting our own principles by leaving 23 million people behind. And yet the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires global partnership and the joint efforts of all stakeholders to mobilize all available resources. Taiwan is ready, willing and able to engage in and contribute to the wide range of substantive United Nations programmes for the welfare of humankind. If we are to focus on people and promote peace and sustainability, let us give Taiwan and its 23 million people a chance.

Let us not contradict the principles that the United Nations was established to represent and allow the rules to change based on whose best interests are at stake. Taiwan has been actively involved in United Nations programmes and specialized agencies. Despite its contributions to the well-being of the citizens of the world, we continue to ignore Taiwan's right to self-determination; as such, it is high time that the Assembly gave due recognition to Taiwan as a legitimate member of the family of nations.

Article 73 of our Charter also speaks powerfully on fundamental human rights. In the 1960 Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, the General Assembly stated:

> "The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and cooperation" (*resolution 1514 (XV), para. 1*).

Thanks to that Article, the people of New Caledonia will hold a referendum in 2018 whereby they can finally decide, without fear or favour, on their political future.

I wish them all the best. I must thank and commend the administering Power for working closely with the Special Committee on Decolonization (Committee of 24) on the issue of New Caledonia. I hope that the same level of cooperation will also be shown on French Polynesia and that a visit by the Committee of 24 will occur soon.

The position of Solomon Islands on the issues I have mentioned is premised on principles that we have consistently upheld. In this connection, Solomon Islands condemns the consistent human rights violations in West Papua. Our Sustainable Development Goals, which promote the notion of no one being left behind, will be empty promises unless we in the United Nations take active steps to address the plight of the peoples of West Papua. Indeed, we left them behind some 50 years ago when, as a family of nations, we noted their plight without adding much. Since then, the peoples of West Papua have never been allowed the proper act of self-determination guaranteed by the inalienable right to self-determination, as expressed in United Nations human rights covenants.

Only the international action of individual countries and the leading organizational bodies of the international system, especially the General Assembly, can pave the way for the recognition of a people whose right to self-determination has been denied for nearly 50 years. Failing that, we as a family of nations will become complicit in perpetuating suffering and being blind to injustice, missing yet another golden opportunity to remain true to the idea of leaving no one behind. At the seventy-first session, a group of Pacific Island nations called for the General Assembly to address the human rights violations in West Papua. Today, I stand before the Assembly on behalf of my people and those of the Pacific region to reiterate that same call to address the plight of West Papuan women, children and men.

Our people are watching. West Papuans in West Papua are watching, praying and hoping for a brighter future. They have come in numbers to express their hope for a better future. We as leaders have the responsibility to leave no one behind. I would therefore encourage Indonesia to engage in more constructive dialogue, including with West Papua, to find a way forward in addressing the aspirations of the people of West Papua. I urge the United Nations to proactively engage in those dialogues as well.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights worldwide, my country and region included. Violence against women is an obstacle to gender equality, economic opportunities and livelihoods. The final *Pacific Regional Millennium Development Goals Tracking Report*, published in 2015, highlighted the fact that violence against women was an impediment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. If our region is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we will have to intensify efforts and increase support and cooperation to end violence against women and girls.

The Solomon Islands Family Protection Act of 2014 was a national response to the urgent need to curtail the increasing rate of domestic violence. It was aimed at ensuring that homes in Solomon Islands, as important units of the community, are peaceful and safe for all members of a family. The Act covers any type of abuse that happens in the home between perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. Yes, we have made big strides in not just counting women, but more importantly, in making women count.

As a small island developing State and least developed country with inherent structural capacity constraints, we greatly rely on the United Nations system to support and augment our national efforts in implementing national development programmes. It is our hope that this expectation will be met by concrete and measurable deliverables on the ground by our United Nations partners.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's reform agenda and applauds his vision for repositioning sustainable development at the heart of the United Nations. Its guiding framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its pledge to leave no one behind, is indeed our boldest agenda for humankind. For my country, it will have to include fair representation in the recruitment of staff to the United Nations Secretariat. Despite having only one national at the Secretariat, we have not been invited to sit the young professionals' exams for two years in a row now. We nevertheless remain steadfast in our support and encouragement of action for a strong and effective United Nations, and we stand ready to support the Secretary-General's noble efforts to transform the Organization, including the Security Council.

The United Nations is still the town hall of our global village. People know what it does but do not

see much value in it. It is inevitably imperfect. As the Organization's second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, famously said, "The United Nations was not created to take humanity to heaven, but to save it from hell". The Organization's imperfections, however, only mean that we need to work harder to make it better. So let us do that.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Zoran Zaev, President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Zoran Zaev, President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Zoran Zaev, President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Zaev (Macedonia) (*spoke in Macedonian, English text provided by the delegation*): It is an honour for me to address the Assembly and to share the Republic of Macedonia's positions on the most important issues on the United Nations agenda. I firmly believe that we share the common goal of world peace. I also believe that we share the same commitments to a decent life for all in a sustainable environment and, further, that we will find common solutions to our common challenges. Peace, commitment to a decent life, and joint solutions are the values that the Republic of Macedonia has relied on in overcoming a deep political crisis that had repercussions throughout our region.

We are a small, diverse countryy. We have managed to overcome difficult challenges because we have united around common values. That is why today the Republic of Macedonia is again free, secure and stable. It is a friend to all its neighbours and is firmly oriented towards full integration into NATO and the European Union.

(*spoke in English*)

As Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Macedonia, I want to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák of the Slovak Republic on his election to the prestigious position of President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would also like to express our full support to Secretary-General Guterres. We wish him great success in carrying out his comprehensive, ambitious and much-needed agenda to transform and adapt the United Nations to enable it to meet its demanding tasks and our common challenges, both existing and emerging.

The United Nations must continue to do more and better to meet those challenges and stand the test of time. We must be vigilant and constant, but also seek to develop innovative and adaptable conflict prevention, sustainable development and management reform mechanisms, while building on the foundations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and other core documents.

The world is plagued by severe humanitarian crises, new and protracted old conflicts, the intensification of terrorist attacks and violent extremism, human rights abuses and increasing climate-change effects. Different in scope and weight, those challenges have become more complex. They require a wide-ranging response. While we have been able to mitigate the consequences for some, others remain unabated. Just a few weeks ago, we witnessed devastating natural disasters in the Gulf of Mexico and South Asia. That is a harsh reminder that our planet is changing, and we all have an obligation to do our best to mitigate and hopefully reverse the consequences. We can progress if we are united.

The promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law must remain at the core of our action. Despite the fact that the United Nations has a robust human rights architecture, the current blatant human rights violations, widespread impunity and lack of accountability around the globe remind us that there is much to be done.

Monstrous terrorist attacks have increased in number. Our actions must focus on preventing violent extremism and radicalization, as they are major factors for terrorist recruitment. The establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, in which one of the priority areas is prevention, was a welcome step. For our part, we are also working on a national strategy for the prevention of violent extremism and

radicalization. I am aware that there are differing approaches to those crucial issues, as we have divergent views among us. However, I would like to urge the international community not to focus on its differences, but rather on its primary responsibility to act robustly for the common good.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery continues to jeopardize global security. The implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) is key to minimizing the possible disastrous consequences for the generations to come. In that regard, let me underline that we are deeply alarmed by the continued unilateral actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which has been conducting nuclear tests and missile launches despite the repeated calls of the international community to fully comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions. We believe that the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is possible, and we therefore urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately abandon its nuclear and missile programmes and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Let me comment briefly on the main theme of the current session of the General Assembly, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". States must remain focused on the implementation of the new sustainable development agenda that we agreed on at the seventieth anniversary of our Organization. That remarkable undertaking laid the foundations for the future development framework. That had implications for many other important areas of common concern.

Many vital issues affecting global prosperity are related to the implementation of that agenda. It is therefore important to continue to encourage and build new avenues of cooperation and new partnerships among us. That is central to the integration of the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability. Those are the fundamentals for development and a hopeful future, as well as for our peace, stability and security. At the national level, our efforts to transform agreed goals into practice are included in the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework programme, the 2016-2020 United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Here I would like to mention to last year's important summit on the issue of large-scale movements of refugees and migrants. That is a global phenomenon with various causes and diverse implications. The United Nations adopted a comprehensive political declaration and pledged to intensify international cooperation, in particular among countries of origin or nationality, transit and destination.

The Republic of Macedonia supports and is participating in the ongoing consultation processes on the two compacts dealing with refugees and migrants. We expect an outcome that will address all aspects of these global phenomena. Let me remind everyone that in the past couple of years, hundreds of thousands of migrants have transited through my country and the region. Even though that presented complex challenges, we managed to provide humanitarian assistance to the people in need. Since we have to adapt globally, we must also do our homework and act as responsible Governments in order to secure and provide a better future and prosperity for our people.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia affirms its dedication to fundamental democratic values, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. We overcame a deep political and institutional crisis through our resolute stand in defence of those fundamentals. Our understanding is that democracy must be driven by civic engagement from the bottom up. Societies are better off when decision-making is comprehensive, inclusive and transparent. Public policies must work for citizens' well-being.

My Government has laid out an ambitious reform plan with short-, medium- and long-term measures. Our goal is to restore democracy, build professional and independent institutions and improve the standard of living for every citizen, and to expedite the integration of the Republic of Macedonia into the European Union and NATO.

From the depths of a political crisis we have emerged stronger, and we have been able to contribute to regional stability and cooperation. Those who know Balkan history know that our region has not always been seen in a positive light. I strongly believe that we have a new chance to make a change, not just in perceptions but in substance. Over the past few months, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has strongly promoted a new approach to its neighbours. We have demonstrated the capacity to overcome open issues. We have articulated our national interests and acted in pursuit of them. At the same time, we have been fully aware and respectful of the national interests of our neighbours.

Our policy is based on solving issues through dialogue and cooperation. We hope that that approach will inspire others and stimulate a new approach to bilateral relations in our region. As a positive step forward, let me underscore our signing of a bilateral agreement on friendship, good-neighbourliness and cooperation with Bulgaria. That represents a joint success for the two countries.

This session of the General Assembly represents the twenty-fifth year of our participation as an independent State. Next year, we will mark a quarter-century of our United Nations membership. However, that anniversary is also marked by the dispute over how my country should be referred to, which has unilateral consequences on our development and perspectives.

The Interim Accord of 1995 laid the foundations for a normalization of relations between Macedonia and Greece. At present, the two countries are implementing confidence-building measures, and that is a very positive development. We have a fresh impetus to overcome the long-standing bilateral dispute. I would say that we have both made certain mistakes at various times, but the main goal now is to resolve the issue and close it.

I firmly believe that we must seize the momentum, conduct discussions in good faith and resolve the issue for our shared future. We greatly value the continuing efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Matthew Nimetz, and the good offices that he provides to that end. I firmly believe that there is a way to overcome the problem that Greece has with our constitutional name. For a change, let us try to approach it from a positive point of view.

Maintaining good neighbourly and friendly relations is a two-way street. We are committed to doing our job and expect the same of our neighbours. That message has already been clearly sent to our friends and partners. I would like to reaffirm it here, from the rostrum, where all of us have been recalling the purposes and principals of the Charter of the United Nations. The world can be a very noisy place, but the most important things can be very quiet. I believe that if we listen to our peoples, we can hear the world.

In conclusion, I want to underline that the Republic of Macedonia remains a staunch supporter of multilateralism. We will continue to work with the United Nations and all Member States on jointly reinforcing world peace and security, promoting human rights, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and dealing with all the other issues that are crucial for the people we represent.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Zoran Zaev, President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Desalegn (Ethiopia): I would like to join other delegations in congratulating the President on his election to preside over the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and I wish to assure him of the support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of his responsibilities through the course of the session. Let me also take this opportunity to express appreciation to his predecessor, who effectively guided the work of the General Assembly at its previous session.

We welcome the appointment of Mr. António Guterres as the new Secretary-General and support his call for a surge in diplomacy for peace in addressing the many crisis situations that the world is facing today. Let me stress here we are behind the Secretary-General in his efforts to reform the Organization in the three interrelated areas of development, peace and security, and management.

It has been indeed a great pleasure and honour for Ethiopia to preside over the work of the Security Council during this important month, when world leaders gather in New York for the new session of the

General Assembly to discuss issues of global peace, security and development. We would like to express our gratitude to all the delegations that participated in the high-level open debate of the Security Council on Wednesday, 20 September, on the reform of United Nations peacekeeping operations (see S/PV.8051). As a leading troop-contributing country, Ethiopia attaches great importance to strengthening the role of United Nations peacekeeping in addressing challenges to international peace and security.

In that regard, we welcome the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2378 (2017), which we introduced on Wednesday, and we thank all delegations that sponsored the resolution, which reaffirms the central role of United Nations peacekeeping as one of the most effective tools available to the world in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security.

That the world is facing unprecedented challenges to its peace and prosperity has been all too apparent for quite some time now. Geopolitical tensions reminiscent of the Cold War are increasing. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is posing a real threat to global peace and security. Terrorism and violent extremism continue to wreak havoc across various parts of the world. Global income inequality is no longer just a development challenge; it is also a security threat. Climate change is not a fiction but real, and we are witnessing its devastating consequences for humankind and the planet. Countries such as my own continue to face that horrendous challenge to their development.

Three major peace and security reviews were conducted only two years ago, providing valuable recommendations, which, if implemented, could help the United Nations keep pace with the changing global security dynamics and respond effectively to new and emerging peace and security challenges in a comprehensive, systematic and coordinated manner. The clear conclusion of the three major reviews was that the primary United Nations approach to resolving conflicts should be a political one. Indeed, the many conflict and crisis situations around the world cannot be resolved other than through political means. That holds true not only for the crisis in South Sudan, close to my country, but also for the conflicts that are raging in the Middle East, including in Syria and Yemen, as well as the dangerous situation on the Korean peninsula. It is therefore only by reaffirming our commitments to the letter and spirit of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, on the pacific settlement of disputes, that we can effectively respond to the global peace and security challenges we are facing today.

However, that is obviously easier said than done. That is because without the political will and commitment of the conflicting parties to finding a political solution through dialogue and negotiation, peace is bound to elude us. A common purpose and resolve on the part of all external actors involved in the search for a political solution to conflict and crisis situations are also absolutely vital. What current global security requires is a stronger and more effective global and regional partnership in the service of conflict prevention and peace. What we have repeatedly seen is that in the absence of that partnership, which must be underpinned by the principles of complementarity and coherence, no meaningful progress can be achieved. The United Nations should be able to play a leading role in forging those kinds of partnerships and in sharing the burden in accordance with the Charter.

The links connecting peace, security and development have long been recognized, and that was also the other clear key message emanating from the three major peace and security reviews. More peaceful and inclusive societies generate an environment conducive to sustainable development, and sustainable peace is both an enabler and an outcome of sustainable development. The year 2015 was indeed seminal in that regard. The commitment that we made in this Hall to the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to inclusiveness, leaving no one behind, was the result of our shared conviction that our fates and futures are linked and that poverty is a shared challenge. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were further reinforced by the adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which entered into force last November, thereby strengthening the global response to the threats posed by that phenomenon.

Today, however, it is no longer the time to celebrate those achievements; we need rather to reflect where we are in terms of their implementation. Though the SDGs were endorsed by all with much optimism, the current state of affairs is far from reassuring. The global situation since their adoption has not been conducive to ensuring their reasonably effective implementation. That is a major disappointment for all those who have been hoping to see renewed global partnership in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda.

For our part, we have fully embraced and begun to record encouraging initial results in implementing the 2030 Agenda. We have continued to invest in our people so as to improve their well-being. In order to achieve structural transformation and diversify our economy, the Government is expanding our manufacturing sector and infrastructure facilities, which have continued to attract an increasing amount of domestic and foreign investments. In order to finance our ambitious national projects, we are mobilizing domestic resources while maximizing the positive impacts of foreign assistance. By implementing integrated, pro-poor policies, we have been reducing poverty and enhancing the quality of life, and we have sustained our rapid and inclusive economic growth.

Ethiopia is therefore projected to be the fastest growing economy in the world by the end of 2017. That should, of course, not be a source of complacency; it should rather drive us further to redouble our determination and endeavours to accelerate the full implementation of our current national development policy, which integrates the SDGs, and we will remain fully committed to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, to responding to the legitimate development demands of our people and to addressing our multifaceted development challenges. That is not easy, nor are our challenges uncomplicated, most particularly those related to natural phenomena.

We in Ethiopia, like many other countries, are dealing almost every day with the adverse effects of climate change. Now is not the time, therefore, to doubt their devastating impact, while millions of our fellow humans are losing their lives and their hard-won development achievements. That is happening all over the world. It is high time to act urgently and decisively to combat the adverse impacts of climate change, particularly its disproportionately bad effect on the most vulnerable countries, which, as has been repeatedly pointed out, bear almost no responsibility for causing climate change.

Climate change, not just poverty, is our major challenge. The current climate-induced drought is affecting millions of people. For the third consecutive year, after successfully dealing with the El Niño-induced drought in 2015, Ethiopia is confronting the adverse effects of climate change. That is why I said earlier that climate change is real and poses a clear danger for humankind, because it undermines development gains. We are doing everything that we can to mitigate its negative effects, with the continuing and much appreciated support of our bilateral and multilateral partners. While we are committed to addressing our current humanitarian emergency, we will also continue to implement our national strategy to build a green and resilient economy.

Countries such as Ethiopia that are fully committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Agenda require an international environment that can help them succeed in their fight against poverty. Ending poverty, achieving prosperity for all and preserving our planet are attainable goals. We know that we have the resources and the capabilities to achieve a world free from poverty. We have begun implementing the SDGs, albeit unevenly, but time is of the essence. We must accelerate the process if we are to leave no one behind. That has enormous meaning for peace, security and prosperity as well. Poverty and economies that fail to produce employment opportunities are not fertile ground for peace to grow in and be nurtured.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Martí Petit (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan. Spanish text provided by the delegation*): I would like to begin by congratulating the President, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, on his choice of theme for the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. The link between peace and a dignified life is, without a doubt, one of the key issues of our time — as is sustainable development,

which has become the principal challenge facing the international community. The priorities set forth by the President and the theme for the current session highlight the close link between peace, a dignified life and a sustainable planet.

The choice of those priorities and theme are in keeping with what we have been building together over the years, as reflected in the aims of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which we agreed on two years ago, and are also based on the actions of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, during his first nine months at the helm of the United Nations.

Next year will mark 70 years since the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first major joint success of the United Nations. Throughout those seven decades, we have learned that the goals shared by all of humankind are interrelated. The United Nations was founded with the fundamental aim of preventing conflicts and ensuring peace. Over the centuries, all our parliaments and assemblies have been established on the basis of that goal, namely, to peacefully resolve conflicts and make decisions that affect us all together. This parliament, an assembly of all the countries of the world, was also founded on that very desire.

Soon afterwards, the original objective of maintaining peace and security was joined by those of promoting human rights and, subsequently, by the economic and social development of nations and their citizens. That in itself was because the international community became aware of the strong relationship between development opportunities and the prevention of conflict. A fairer world with fewer inequalities, with opportunities for all and respect for our differences, will tend to be a safer and more peaceful world.

It was several decades ago that the United Nations turned its focus towards another major objective, namely, sustainability, caring for the environment and, more specifically, the fight against climate change. In June we marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Its four objectives — peace, human rights, development and sustainability — continue to be priorities. All four are tightly interconnected, and all four require a multilateral approach, since no country, no matter how powerful, can guarantee peace and security alone.

No country or group of countries can implement development policies alone, and no country can fight climate change alone. We must therefore continue to uphold inclusive multilateralism. It is not enough to simply work together to resolve issues that affect us all — the solutions we agree on should leave no one behind. They must be fair and inclusive, and we must make sure that they benefit us all.

It is in that spirit that Andorra has become a member of the Economic and Social Council for 2017 to 2019, because it is in that Council that inclusive multilateralism is truly significant. The Economic and Social Council is the clearest manifestation that the United Nations not only strives to be an assembly of the world's countries but also wants to have a direct impact on the lives of citizens all over the world. If, as the Secretary-General stated, development is the key to conflict prevention, the Economic and Social Council is a key tool for that.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also plays a key role. For that reason, Andorra will participate in the next round of voluntary national reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals, which will evaluate our implementation of the 2030 Agenda and accelerate its effective application.

Everyone here knows that we live in a world of constant assessment. Rating agencies measure the solvency of our countries, the World Trade Organization analyses the level of openness and interdependence of our economies and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development ensures transparency and healthy fiscal competition between States. Never before have we experienced the evaluative capacity of various international agencies and bodies so intensely, especially in the economic and financial sphere.

That is a positive thing, but it will not be if we limit those evaluations to the economic and financial sphere. We must be equally demanding in the social sphere — although economic progress does indeed play a very important role in constructing a fairer and safer world. The promotion of a decent life and social development are also essential elements. That is what the voluntary national reviews are — a means of measuring all we are doing to attain the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. Andorra will submit its voluntary report next July. The various ministries and departments of the Andorran Government have, in fact, been working for some time to align our internal

policies with the 2030 Agenda and ensure that our internal actions comply with each of the 17 Goals to which we all committed on 25 September 2015.

From a social perspective, the work that Andorra has done over the past year to develop a white paper on equality as a basis for cross-cutting actions to foster inclusion in both the public and the private sectors is a clear example. When I say that Andorra is developing this white paper, I mean the country as a whole, not just the Government. Of course, the Government and Parliament must act as initiators and leaders, but they do so with the full participation of civil society. The white paper will lead to a law on equality, which should be the key tool in our effort to eradicate the discrimination that still persists in our society.

All that work is clearly aligned with Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 10 on reducing inequalities within and among countries. Inclusive multilateralism, which I mentioned a few moments ago, should not only prevail in the General Assembly but should also guide our internal policies. At the national level, we need to involve the largest possible number of actors and find solutions that work for everyone.

There are also other examples of Andorra's efforts in the context of domestic policy, such as in the area of education, which is directly linked to Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, we are working to introduce competency-based education; to continue and improve the coexistence of our three educational systems — in Spanish, French and Andorran — all of which are public, free of charge and open to all; and to incorporate human rights and democratic values in our curriculums for children and young people. All three of those efforts are also in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, and in some instances are inspired by them. A good example of our commitment to international educational standards is the Government's recent adoption of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, a key international instrument for promoting equal opportunity.

While the relationship between peace, human rights, security and inclusive development is clear and undeniable, it is also increasingly obvious that combating climate change is a crucial pillar of that edifice. That is because the destruction of ecosystems and the natural disasters linked to climate change directly and cruelly affect the most vulnerable people; because a scarcity of natural resources is at the heart of many current conflicts; because the new paradigm of sustainability drastically changes our previous notion of economic and social development; and because — and pardon me for mentioning the obvious — if we destroy the planet, there will be no sense in talking about peace, security or development. Fighting climate change will therefore continue to take up much of the debate now and in the future on international actions and initiatives. That is why seven of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are directly related to environmental issues. It is key that much of the our Governments' domestic efforts should address that issue.

In recent times, Andorra has become very aware of the relevance of fighting climate change, and we have demonstrated that through actions. Thanks to an ambitious aid programme, Andorra has one of the world's most significant growth rates per inhabitant for electric automobiles and numbers of points for charging electric vehicles. Given that heating buildings is one of our biggest sources of greenhouse-gas emissions, we are investing substantially in network projects that centralize heat generation, making it more efficient and less polluting. We are also implementing a policy of incentives and obligations to promote citizens' own production of renewable solar and geothermal energy. Lastly, we are drafting a law on energy transition that will make all such policies mandatory.

As most members of the international community stated in December 2015, we do not want this effort to remain merely pious words or a catalogue of good intentions that will not be translated into concrete action. We therefore welcome the initiative of Mr. Emmanuel Macron, the President of our partner country, France, to promote a global compact for the environment, which will collect and harmonize all of the agreements signed and implemented since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 through to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change — because it is important that all global action to protect the environment and fight climate change be reflected in specific rights and obligations for States and individuals. Andorra heartily welcomes the work that has been done so far for the global compact, which includes, as a substantive right for individuals, the right to a sound and healthy environment. Here, our 1993 Constitution was a bellwether, as it includes the right to a clean environment as a citizens' right and, therefore, a duty for the public authorities.

The various international conventions aimed at protecting the environment must be reflected in specific actions that will have tangible effects for people, because the negative effects of climate change and global warming have been apparent for some time and are having a very negative effect on the planet and its inhabitants. I have in mind especially the concerns we have about the Pacific islands, which are threatened by a rise in sea levels, the fragile ecosystems of mountainous countries such as Andorra, and the extraordinary, devastating force of the hurricanes that have been hitting the Caribbean region recently.

More than ever before, we need inclusive multilateralism that will leave no one behind. But we also need effective multilateralism that works, offers concrete results and responds to people's problems. Work to that end begins here at United Nations Headquarters, which must adjust the Organization to the needs of both countries and their citizens. The first mission of any organization, from private companies to Governments, is an internal one — ensuring that its members and structures are aligned with its final objectives and that they are well prepared to respond to various needs. We therefore welcome the fact that one of the first steps taken by Secretary-General Guterres was on his project to reform the United Nations development system.

If we really believe that peace, human rights, development and sustainability are closely interrelated, we would logically expect the various bodies and committees dealing with such issues to work together in a coordinated manner, just as it is logical and necessary for specific problems to be managed by specific departments. Proof of the fact that the Secretary-General is doing a good job is his decision to establish a United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism headed by an Under-Secretary-General.

The importance of fighting terrorism has been trumpeted everywhere in recent years. We Andorrans have seen our European neighbours suffer directly from the consequences of such irrational hatred. In Spain last month, Barcelona and Cambrils, two Catalan towns that are close to Andorra, suffered from the problem.

Peace and security have more complex dimensions today than they did 70 years ago. In the mid-twentieth century, after two world wars, the maintenance of peace and security could be addressed and resolved here in the Assembly through frank dialogue and effective cooperation and among countries. Bilateral diplomacy also played a significant role. Today, with the global threat of terrorism, while diplomacy between States continues to be very important in settling issues of peace and security, they also require concrete action for combating terrorism and eradicating its root causes. The Secretary-General can therefore count on Andorra's support for his establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other measures designed to improve the functioning of the Organization and provide the effective answers that citizens of the world expect from all of us.

The question of the effectiveness of the United Nations is important not only for the Secretary-General but also clearly for all of us States Members of the Organization. It is all of us who must work to ensure that global agreements, starting with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, are truly binding, to assess with transparency various countries' compliance with those agreements and to avoid the possibility that the United Nations and the international community could become paralysed or inactive in the face of the great challenges and major crises of our times.

It is for those reasons that Andorra has supported, and will continue to support, the Rome Statute and the Kampala Amendments, which make it possible for the International Criminal Court to exercise its jurisdiction in cases of crimes of aggression that clearly violate the Charter of the United Nations. Allowing the Court to act ex officio in the most serious cases without the need for referrals by the Security Council would be a meaningful step forward for the rule of law at the international level.

For the same reason, Andorra will continue to support initiatives that seek to limit the right of the veto for the permanent members of the Security Council in cases of genocide or serious human rights violations. In our opinion, the political declaration adopted two years ago on the initiative of the French Republic and the United Mexican States, which provides for the suspension of the veto in cases involving mass atrocities, is a good course of action to follow.

No one should be surprised by the fact that Andorrans are faithful defenders of the multilateral order. Like other small countries, we firmly believe that the major challenges of our time must be addressed globally, and that what the various countries of the world can do for themselves amounts to very little

without global and concerted action. That is why much of our foreign policy is focused on multilateral forums, as we showed four years ago during the Andorran presidency of the Council of Europe. Evidence for that will also be seen next month, when Andorra hosts the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and from our candidacy to organize the Ibero-American Summit in 2020.

The Ibero-American community is in mourning today for the victims of the earthquake that took place in Mexico last Tuesday. The Government and the Mexican people know that they can count on the sympathy and solidarity of the Principality of Andorra.

As I have said, our dedication to the purposes and principles of the United Nations is clear and firm. Secretary-General António Guterres can rely on Andorra to help build a sustainable, safe and fair world that involves everyone, with no one left behind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Hassan Ali Khayre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Mr. Hassan Ali Khayre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hassan Ali Khayre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Khayre (Somalia): It is an honour to address the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I bring warm greetings and good wishes from our President, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, and the entire Government and the people of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Allow me first to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his assumption of his post and his capable work in steering this organ towards a successful session. Yesterday we observed the International Day of Peace, a day that calls for togetherness and solidarity with those who have been forced to flee their homes and those who leave home to seek a better life. The theme of this year's General Assembly session speaks of peace and a decent life on a sustainable planet. The similarity in focus goes beyond coincidence to acknowledge that the pursuit of peace, a decent life, respect, safety and dignity is a global need. Yet it is elusive for hundreds of millions of people in the world today. From Syria to the Central African Republic, from the Rohingya people of Myanmar to the people of Libya, the number of protracted and new conflicts remains unacceptably high.

The Somali people have for many years been the victims of war, famine and poverty, which has seen some of them displaced internally, while others made the perilous journey abroad. We are therefore all too familiar with the need for others to open their doors to distraught and disillusioned people who, just like us, are seeking a safe and dignified life. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who, even in challenging times, continue to uphold that spirit of oneness, sharing and caring.

Somalia is rising, and we are determined to stay the course. Our aim is to contribute positively to the progress of our region, our continent and the world. Despite the enormous challenges, we are, among other things, improving security, re-establishing law and order and conducting the necessary political and socioeconomic reforms. The progress we have achieved so far is the result of our people's embrace of a new dawn and our steadfast partners' willingness to continue supporting us on our journey towards peace and prosperity.

We will continue to formulate measures to strengthen Somalia's progress, including in revenue generation. However, we are dealing with some serious challenges beyond the control of the Somali Government. Debt relief would have the effect of unlocking concessional financing, attracting foreign investment and providing an opportunity that is critical to sustaining our reform efforts, and consequently reinvigorating our economy. We are already working with international financial institutions towards that objective and, through this forum, seek the support of the international community.

Terrorism remains one of our pressing challenges. Its repercussions are felt around the globe. Our unity in addressing this scourge, both collectively and sustainably, is therefore critical. No effort should be spared to neutralize the growth and influence of international terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and Al-Qaida, which, as we know, are key influencers of localized terrorism. Efforts to step up military interventions against such groups should be redoubled. We in Somalia have made significant strides that have weakened the capability of Al-Shabaab.

In that regard, I would like to thank those participating in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for their sacrifice, unfailing support, dedication and solidarity in the fight against Al-Shabaab. In order to ensure that such gains are sustainable, we are focused on strengthening the military capacity of our national security forces. However, the arms embargo imposed on Somalia severely limits our ability to achieve that objective. The Federal Government of Somalia will continue to work with the Security Council and relevant actors on our road map to get it lifted.

Poverty and a lack of education and livelihood opportunities continue to contribute to the growth of violent extremism. Across the world, disillusioned young people are at a heightened risk of exploitation by criminal networks, including terrorists. The need to invest in education, skill-building and livelihood opportunities for our youth is urgent. Addressing those key strategic elements in order to counter terrorism is an enormous task that requires a holistic approach and resources to match. We continue to call on friends of Somalia to help us in such an important undertaking.

We cannot talk about a sustainable planet without demonstrating a commitment to making the world livable for ourselves and future generations. Somalia is one of the countries that have been ravaged by a vicious cycle of man-made and natural disasters directly created by environmental degradation. Scarce rains lead to crop failure and the death of livestock, which subsequently lead to drought and famine. Currently, the humanitarian situation of millions of Somalis remains fragile, as the bite of the current drought, which still threatens to develop into famine, continues. Our national development plan outlines a clear and realistic road map towards breaking that vicious cycle. However, Somalia and many other countries that are on the receiving end of climate change have been unable to come up with the resources required to tackle this ever-growing problem. In that regard, we urge all Member States to continue improving the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which has the potential to mitigate the issue's effects. Similarly, developing countries like Somalia need investment in long-term initiatives, including infrastructure development, water conservation, innovative food and livestock production and the creation of livelihood opportunities.

We must get better at streamlining global development and aid structures, especially for fragile States. We must revisit the prevailing paradigms and take bold and innovative steps to improve that architecture. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, adopted in South Korea in 2011, was certainly a great step in that direction. Somalia fully embraced the New Deal. Yet even with all of its strengths, the New Deal needs improvement. That said, the principles of mutual accountability that are embedded in the framework are exactly what fragile countries like Somalia need. It often happens that pledges are made, only to be later neglected. That should not be the case, because fragile countries rely on such support to rebuild their States. Conversely, development partners are often frustrated with fragile countries' weak transparency and accountability institutions. That is a legitimate concern. As fragile nations, we must do better by tackling corruption and plugging leaks. Somalia recently took bold steps to address corruption. Our anti-corruption bill, which is critical for putting in place measures for good governance and accountability, has been approved by my Cabinet and introduced for enactment by Parliament. The leadership of my country has also reiterated its zero-tolerance policy on corruption.

Also related to funding, we must find predictable financing for non-United Nations peacekeeping missions. That is particularly true for AMISOM. AMISOM has registered tremendous success for more than a decade, and yet each year it continues to operate with uncertainty about its funding. We believe that investment in peacekeeping is a worthy investment in peacebuilding and State-building. We have seen the dividends of such investment in Somalia. I look forward to engaging with our partners on that matter in the coming weeks and months.

A fundamental element of peacebuilding and State-building is how any country treats its marginalized and voiceless citizens. Women are crucial

in decision-making and represent an investment in society. In spite of our many challenges, Somalia has made significant steps in that regard. During the 2016 election, the number of women in Parliament increased from 14 to 24 per cent of the total. Although we missed our target of 30 per cent, we have improved markedly from a few years ago.

Six months ago, when I was forming my Council of Ministers, I appointed six women to my Cabinet. They hold some of the most important portfolios in our nation, including in trade and industry, health, youth and sports, women and human rights and humanitarian affairs. Women have played an instrumental role in Somalia during our worst times. In addition to being mothers, wives and sisters, they dominate the informal economy. Many living as refugees and migrants remain the lifeline of their families through remittances sent to Somalia.

Similarly, young people are vital to peacebuilding and State-building. The number of youths in our Parliament has increased exponentially. I have also appointed a number of very young people to key Cabinet positions. Tragically, one of them, Mr. Abbas Siraji, was killed in May. He was a beacon of hope for Somalia's young people. Having grown up in Kenya, in the world's largest refugee camp, he worked hard, studied and worked for various United Nations agencies. I appointed him Minister of Public Works and Reconstruction when he was 31. Although he is no longer with us, his appointment brought out the potential of thousands of young people across the country. He showed them that life in the refugee camps, harsh as it was, did not mean the end of hope.

Human rights is one of the core principles of the United Nations. We are working hard to ensure respect for the human rights of all people. Our establishment of institutions such as our National Human Rights Commission, which is mandated to protect and promote human rights, will be a significant step in that direction. Vital legislation on human rights, such as the soon-to-be-approved sexual offences bill, will provide the tools to fight impunity for perpetrators of sexual crimes. However fond we are of our traditions, that should never be a reason to condone impunity. My Government is determined to find ways to harmonize our traditional dispute-resolution approach and the conventional justice system in a manner that respects the human rights of its people.

The United Nations continues to be the world's most important shared platform for nations to develop and strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations. It is a core United Nations principle for States to respect one another's political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is a principle that should be promoted and upheld at all times, especially when engaging with fragile States, such as Somalia.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to add my voice to those supporting reform of the United Nations. The Organization has worked for peace and stability for decades, and I strongly believe that the Secretary-General's reform agenda will most certainly lead to a far more responsive and dynamic institution. As a country that has greatly benefited from the United Nations system, we have also seen that it can improve its overall efficiency.

With that, I would like to conclude by once again reminding all of us that we must redouble our efforts to focus on peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet. That will take collective recognition of the fact that what happens in one corner of the world can affect those in other corners, too.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hassan Ali Khayre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Thabane (Lesotho): Allow me to begin by congratulating the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-

second session. His illustrious career as a diplomat gives us confidence that we will see a successful session, and I assure him of my delegation's full support and cooperation during his tenure. Let me also commend his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his excellent leadership of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. He handled that great responsibility very well and with much skill and devotion.

During the previous session, we also witnessed the appointment of the new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, whose impeccable credentials and distinguished service within the United Nations, coupled with his wealth of knowledge and experience, leave us hopeful that he will handle the challenges of his new position with dexterity. We therefore congratulate him on his well-deserved appointment and wish him success in the long journey ahead. We also pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for a job well done. He performed the duties of his high office with consummate diplomatic skill and honour.

We meet once again for the seventy-second time in the history of the United Nations in order to appraise the world's political, security and economic situations. We do so at a critical juncture in human history. Now is the time for a true reflection on the role of the Organization in the twenty-first century, since it is on the United Nations that humankind places much faith and hope for a better life for all.

The pall of despair that descended on the world following the Second World War was eased by our forebears' adoption of lofty ideals when they came together in San Francisco and resolved

> "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war;
>
> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and;
>
> "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

Sadly, today we speak of a world that is slowly regressing to resembling the one that existed seven decades ago. The multifaceted and complex challenges that have besieged us are threatening to erode the laudable strides that the United Nations has made since its establishment. Inter- and intra-State conflict characterizes the modern-day world. From the global refugee crisis to the spread of terrorism, the ability of the United Nations to effectively resolve conflict is being put to the test. The heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula, coupled with the flagrant violation there of Security Council resolutions and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, speak to the arms race brewing in that part of the world.

As if that were not enough, respect for human rights and the rule of law — the principles that speak to the very fibre of the United Nations — continues to be flouted with impunity. Women and children in particular face the worst forms of brutal abuse, especially in conflict-ridden countries. Poverty also continues to be a dreadful affliction for developing countries, undermining their efforts to re-orient their economies towards significant gains in real growth. The result is that most poverty-stricken populations are sometimes left with no option but to employ unorthodox methods for economic survival to sustain their livelihoods.

It is in that context that we welcome the theme for this session: "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". It resonates squarely with the principles that underpinned the establishment of the United Nations. That is what the Organization stands for. The complexities and dichotomies that characterize humankind's existence on the planet and the inequalities that prevail between developed and underdeveloped countries would be a thing of the past if we could remain true to our mission and focus on people on our development path.

While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embrace the concept of universal prosperity for all societies, we are all aware that, in essence, that ideal is still far from being realized. We must move forward cooperatively in our efforts to achieve peace and a decent life for all. It is incumbent on the entire international community to act in unison as we strive to restore peace and deploy a universal response to our goals. To that end, our immediate challenge is to come up with a new strategy that encapsulates the SDGs and multidimensionally integrates them into the concept, as the theme outlines.

We are cognizant of the fact that in Lesotho our destiny is in our hands and that the chief responsibility for sustainable and equal development resides with us. As a newly inaugurated Administration, we have set for ourselves the very lofty goal of restructuring all our important Government institutions. In that regard, we

intend to embark on an ambitious yet achievable reform programme. We are committed to fully implementing the decisions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and putting Lesotho on a path of inclusive reform that will consist of constitutional, parliamentary, electoral, public-sector and security-sector reforms. It is an exercise that will involve all stakeholders, who must engage with genuine and total commitment to establishing a stable political order that is conducive to economic development.

As the new Government of Lesotho, our resolve and commitment to implementing SADC decisions signifies our commitment to working together with our regional body in pursuit of lasting peace and security in our country and the whole SADC region. We have made good progress in the implementation of SADC decisions following the recommendations of Justice Mpaphi Phumaphi, which were laid out during his enquiry in Lesotho after the brutal assassination of Lieutenant General Mahao, Lesotho's Army Commander, in June 2015. Today I have to once again report to the Assembly with sadness and great humiliation the assassination of the current Army Commander, Lieutenant General Khoantle Motsomotso, less than three weeks ago, on 5 September, by two senior army officers, who were in turn shot and killed by the General's bodyguards. Despite such daunting challenges to our small mountain Kingdom's political and security instability, SADC is standing firmly behind us as a regional bloc to help restore peace, political stability, security and the rule of law in Lesotho.

On that note, I wantto thank SADC, our development partners, the Friends of Lesotho, the African Union and the United Nations for their unwavering support in ensuring that Lesotho's democracy is protected in its pursuit of economic g:owth and stability.

On the development front, I am happy to report that the Government of Lesotho is committed to maintaining fiscal discipline in order to stabilize the national economy and stimulate growth and business activity while preserving the environment. At the same time, we are relentlessly committed to combating crime and corruption at all levels of our society, in accordance with SDG 16, which recognizes that corruption undermines efforts to combat poverty and gender equality. It further acts as a tax on the poor when it comes to accessing their right to public services. We are aware that on our own, without the support of our cooperating partners, our efforts to root out corruption cannot yield the desired results; hence our urgent call to them to join forces with us in our crusade.

As a least developed country, we believe that the concept of development is meaningful only when it gives communities tangible benefits in a sustainable manner. It is indisputable fact that young people are the thread that holds together the fabric of every nation and that at the same time they can be major agents of change. It would be a serious and unwise miscalculation not to recognize them as our partners of today and leaders of tomorrow. In that regard, we emphasize the importance of young people's participation in decision-making at all levels. Job creation for young people also remains a priority. With reference to SDG 8, our global strategy for youth employment is set to be operationalized by 2020. Countries therefore have to develop strategies for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization. In that regard, the Government of Lesotho remains committed in its resolve to harness the energy of young Basotho men and women in order to further the advancement of the economy of our country.

Lesotho continues to deal with the scourge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is more prevalent among young women, who are the backbone of our economy. The empowerment of women is a focus of our development policy. We believe that elevating them to positions of leadership in both the private and public sectors will lead to a more equitable and prosperous society in Lesotho. We recognize that poverty and the AIDS pandemic go hand in hand, and our poverty eradication policies therefore target the most vulnerable groups, including the elderly, AIDS orphans, women and young people. We remain committed to ensuring that those objectives are tackled, for they are key components of the SDGs.

On the economic front, like other landlocked developing countries, Lesotho continues to face challenges inherently linked to its unique geographic position. The burden of high transport costs and cumbersome and slow export processing procedures continues to impose serious impediments to our external trade. I must therefore mention the need for increased international assistance in infrastructure development and institutional capacity-building, as well as industrialization and enhancement of productive capacity, for all developing countries, not only the least developed.

Lesotho continues to support the maintenance of international peace and security. We are deeply disturbed by the ongoing violence in Syria and other parts of the Middle East. The rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has added another dimension to the scourge of international terrorism. It has become a force of destruction and generates mayhem on a global scale. We are encouraged by recent efforts aimed at shrinking the boundaries of the territories controlled by ISIL in Iraq and Syria. As a result of the ongoing violence in the Middle East and elsewhere, the world's refugee population has grown; there are more than 65 million displaced persons, including those fleeing hunger. That situation is intolerable, as it has created an environment in which young people have become vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist movements and human trafficking.

In recent years, Lesotho has faced prolonged droughts due to the El Niño effect, which crippled the entire Southern African subcontinent and led to food shortages and other hardships. The recent hurricanes that have devastated the Caribbean and parts of the United States, along with the torrential rains that have been witnessed in many countries, including floods of biblical proportions, are a stark reminder that climate change is with us and that urgent action is required in accordance with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which was concluded more than a year ago.

We reiterate our appeal that small countries such as Lesotho, including small island States, should be empowered with technologies for dealing with and adapting to climate-change challenges. Sustainable development will elude us without genuine commitment on the part of all, including our development partners. The principles of common but differentiated responsibility and economic might and capability between developed and developing nations will be critical to our success in building a sustainable world. We therefore call on the international community to continue mobilizing and providing additional financial resources to Africa for climate-friendly technologies to address both the urgent adaptation and mitigation needs of Africa and other developing countries. Similarly, we urge countries that have reneged on their support to the Paris Agreement to reconsider their position and return to the fold.

The eradication of colonialism is one of the most notable achievements accomplished by the international community through the United Nations. However, that business remains unfinished. The questions of Western Sahara and Palestine have defied solutions for a long time.

We reiterate our support for Western Sahara in its struggle for self-determination. Every day that passes without a change in the lives of the people of Western Sahara is a reminder to the world that we must renew our determination to fight the injustices perpetrated against the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. History will judge us harshly if we watch in silence as unjust treatment is meted out to the people of that African country. Our silence and inaction will leave an indelible mark of failure on our collective character. In the modern world the use of colonial tactics is totally unacceptable. In that connection, we call on the United Nations to remain resolute in its determination to rid the world of the scourge of colonialism. The agreement by the POLISARIO Front and Morocco to resume negotiations in order to reach a long-term solution has not gone unnoticed. We commend them for that bold step and assure them of our support in that noble endeavour.

The question of Palestine has been on the United Nations agenda for decades. We continue to believe that a two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders, whereby Israel and Palestine coexist side-by-side in equal sovereignty, is the most viable proposal for a permanent settlement to that vexing problem. The Palestinians too deserve to enjoy the right to peace, development and the sanctity of life.

Concerning the nuclear-disarmament landscape, the United Nations made significant progress a few months ago with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons with the goal of eventually achieving their total elimination. That is a historic achievement, especially in the light of the ongoing tensions in the Korean peninsula. The argument that nuclear weapons are a deterrent is a fallacy. Such weapons are a threat to human existence, and their possessors should do the right thing and renounce them in line with their international obligations. The Treaty should not remain a mere paper agreement: it must be ratified and implemented by all.

As I conclude, I would like to point out that we should continue to resist all attempts to undermine the global consensus that the United Nations has built around many issues of importance to our peoples. We

remain convinced that it is the only universal institution that can safeguard world peace and ensure the survival of all and sundry. For it to do so, however, the reform agenda of the United Nations must proceed without further delay, including reform of the Security Council. A Council that is transparent and representative of all regions, including Africa, will go a long way to fulfilling the ideals for which the United Nations was founded. Unilateral actions that defy civility and international law belong to the past. Let us march forward with unity of purpose, while focusing on our peoples and striving for peace so that we can all have a decent life.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Sir Louis Straker, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Integration of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Sir Louis (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Our Organization was founded amid the still glowing embers and simmering tensions of global war. In the shadows of widespread death and destruction, the nations of the world united in recognition of the fact that global challenges can be overcome only through collective action and international law, not misguided unilateralism or short-sighted self-interest. That recognition remains as valid today as it was 72 years ago, even as new threats to life and development have joined armed conflict as challenges demanding a concerted international response.

On behalf of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I would like to express our stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of Mexico as they are suffering the devastating effects of yet another earthquake. As I speak before the Assembly today, the island of Dominica has been levelled by a direct hit from Hurricane Maria, even as it was continuing to recover from the widespread devastation wrought by Tropical Storm Erika two years ago. No individual there has been spared. A series of hurricanes — Harvey, Irma, Jose, and Maria — of unprecedented intensity have struck the peoples of our region with unerring accuracy and rapidity.

The States and territories affected include the United States, Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Dominica, Cuba, Saint Kitts and Nevis, the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, the United States Virgin Islands, Saint Martin, Puerto Rico and, today, the Turks and Caicos Islands. In a period of five weeks, each of those countries and territories has been struck with a force comparable to that of a weapon of mass destruction. Hundreds of people are dead. The damage to infrastructure, while still being calculated, is already estimated at more than $130 billion. The current Atlantic hurricane season is likely to be the most expensive in history. In terms of development, the countries affected will take years, if not decades, to recover from the devastating battering.

Let us make no mistake: the death and destruction wrought by this hurricane season are not merely the result of freak weather events or vengeful acts of God. They are the direct result of the acts and omissions of humankind. They are manifestations of climate change and the symptoms of the prescient predictions made by the overwhelming majority of scientists. Today almost every year is hotter than the preceding one; almost every hurricane season more intense; and almost every storm, drought and flood more destructive than its predecessors. It is a barefaced insult to the intelligence and experience of the peoples of island States and coastal areas to call climate change a hoax.

At this point, it is almost a cliché to reaffirm that small island developing States are the most vulnerable to climate change while contributing the least to the emissions that cause it. But that truism is the foundation of our just, urgent and unavoidable demand that the nations that have contributed most to climate change should also do the most to mitigate its effects and assist others in adapting to our dangerous new realities.

Our global community, in the great tradition of the United Nations and in the spirit of the founders of this Organization, came together through hard-fought negotiations to craft the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, an ambitious if imperfect agreement designed to arrest climate change and assist those most affected by it. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines views any attempt to disavow the freshly minted commitments of the Paris Agreement as an act of hostility, and we draw a direct, causal connection between any such abdication and the future death and destruction that island States face as the result of increasingly frequent and intense weather events.

The independent countries of Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Cuba, the Bahamas and Dominica require the special and sustained support of the international community. These countries need immediate and massive assistance with both immediate relief and long-term reconstruction. That assistance should be concessional and free from antiquated notions of per capita gross domestic product. We therefore join other countries in calling for a donor conference to address the daunting challenges that those countries face. Only together can we recover.

Additionally, the Caribbean territories with special relationships to colonial Powers in the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands are in desperate need of assistance and have limited options for international cooperation, given their unique political status. Despite our small size and limited means, the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have already sent emergency assistance to these territories, as well as technical expertise. We urge administering Powers and potential donors alike to look past political issues and look instead to the needs of the affected peoples and communities. We also call on the colonial Powers to accept their full responsibility for the recovery and rehabilitation of these territories.

The rise of climate change as an existential threat of our era has not replaced the persistent peril of armed conflict across the globe. The human suffering in Syria, Yemen and Myanmar demands greater international attention and action. Similarly, the potential threats to international peace and security posed by tensions on the Korean peninsula, among the Gulf States and in the State of Palestine require persistent and prioritized diplomacy.

Diplomacy, though difficult, is always preferable to the alternative. The United Nations was founded and continues to exist on that fundamental premise. Frustration with the pace of negotiation and mediation cannot give way to the intemperate urge to impose quick military fixes on inherently political problems. Nor can it lead to an illogical interpretation of sovereign self-interest that justifies trampling on the sovereignty of other States.

Sovereignty is not a sword but a shield. The United Nations is not a forum for measuring whose sovereignty is bigger, or whose military is better equipped to pursue its narrow, short-term self-interest. We are a community founded instead on the assumption of the sovereign equality of all States, rich and poor, large and small. One nation's ability to destroy another does not endow it with special rights, but rather profound responsibilities, chief among them restraint. President Theodore Roosevelt's realpolitik adage of speaking softly while carrying a big stick — whatever its limitations — cannot be replaced by irresponsible, bellicose sabre-rattling that inches us closer to the types of conflict that the Assembly was created to prevent.

In that context, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines views with alarm the continued threats to the sovereignty of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. To be sure, the people of Venezuela have endured an extended period of political conflict, which has exacerbated other difficulties in the country. But with illegal street violence dwindling and all political parties committed to the upcoming gubernatorial elections, the interventionist option increasingly floated by the United States and an imprudent Secretary General of the Organization of American States have no place in a modern Latin America.

Similarly, any threat, expressed or implied, to the sovereignty of the peaceful and noble Cuban people is an anachronistic throwback to Cold War posturing without any logical justification, particularly in the light of the recent détente between the Governments of Cuba and the United States.

Let us be clear. Latin America and the Caribbean is a zone of peace. There is no conflict, challenge or disagreement in our region that requires military intervention in any way, shape or form, be it covert, overt or by proxy. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is resolutely and implacably opposed to any attempt to foment external interference or interventionist activities against any nation in our hemisphere.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was honoured to host the 2017 Caribbean regional seminar on decolonization, consistent with our responsibilities as one of the many Caribbean and Pacific small island States and former colonies in Africa and Asia whose self-determination was achieved under the watchful eye of the United Nations. The inconvenient truth is that the decolonization process remains incomplete, and it will be essential to intensify our efforts to achieve the goal of full self-government through the attainment of a legitimate political status option providing for absolute political equality. That principle must be the guiding standard applicable to the small island territories, just

as it was the standard for decolonizing other former colonies. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains fully seized of this issue and was pleased to play its part in completing the unfinished business of decolonization by hosting the 2017 seminar and previous seminars in 2011 and 2005. It is in that spirit that we have great sympathy for the legitimate aspiration of the people of West Papua to freedom and independence and to govern themselves and guide their own destiny through legitimate political means.

The issue of United Nations reform has justifiably gained momentum in recent months. As a large, aging bureaucracy, the United Nations has not demonstrated the nimbleness and responsiveness it needs for our new and fast-paced modern challenges. However, the areas demanding the most immediate and far-reaching reforms are not budgetary allocations or staffing matters but rather the political and organizational underpinnings of the most fossilized structures of the United Nations and the wider international architecture.

The litmus test for any serious talk of United Nations reform is reform of the Security Council. Those who pay lip service to reform while ignoring the need for a reformed Council — with expanded permanent membership, a special voice for island States and radically revised working methods — are simply engaging in an exercise where they attempt to reduce their financial responsibilities while maintaining an unjustifiable grip on disproportionate and outmoded power arrangements.

Similarly, the lessons of the global economic and financial crisis have yet to be implemented. Our inactivity has produced an extended period of halting and uneven recovery and an iniquitous globalization whose unequal distribution of benefits and burdens is spurring a popular backlash worldwide. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council must squarely and frontally address reforms to our international financial architecture, in particular the Bretton Woods institutions.

For Caribbean States, the issue of declining correspondent banking relationships is a grave and gathering threat to our continued growth and ongoing connections to the global economy. The United Nations, the Group of 20 and international financial institutions cannot shirk this issue as a private banking matter. It is a threat to development of the highest priority, and it demands a coordinated, political solution.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines applauds the President's sustained focus on sustainable development. Our Government has located the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the centre of its national development strategies. In the areas of climate change, pollution and biodiversity, we have banned Styrofoam products and turtle-hunting, tightened restrictions on internationally permitted indigenous whaling activity and implemented new coastal protection regulations. We are investing heavily in geothermal and solar energy and expect to generate 80 per cent of our energy needs from renewable sources within the next three years.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also dedicating special funding to technology-based entrepreneurs, improving wages and occupational health and safety legislation and investing in new modern medical facilities. We have launched an innovative zero-hunger fund with interventions targeting food insecurity and unemployment in vulnerable populations, while simultaneously creating a contingency fund to aid in disaster recovery efforts.

We are serious and committed to the achievement of all the SDGs by the year 2030. Nonetheless, as the President and the Secretary-General have recognized, the achievement of the SDGs requires international cooperation and the commitment of new and additional funding. Ours is the only body that can generate and sustain the necessary political will and resources to give life to the ambition of the SDGs. The link between development and peace is well established, and the link between peace and the United Nations is immutable.

A substantial part of the backdrop or context of the continuing socioeconomic challenges of the nation States of our Caribbean civilization is the awful legacy of underdevelopment that European colonialism has bequeathed to us as a consequence of native genocide and African slavery. The international campaign for reparations from the former colonial Powers in order to assist in repairing this malignant legacy is urgent and timely. It deserves the full support of the Assembly, particularly within this decade which has been declared to be focused on the uplifting of persons of African descent.

I repeat yet again the necessity and desirability for the responsible authorities in the Dominican Republic and the United Nations to address properly, and once and for all, the respective issues of the denial of citizenship for persons of Haitian descent in the

Dominican Republic and the cholera epidemic that some United Nations troops in Haiti initiated.

In the quest for deepening multilateralism, international cooperation and peace, the glaring injustice of the continuing denial of Taiwan's membership in the special agencies of the United Nations demands correction. The ghosts of a divisive past ought to be laid to rest. Taiwan's legitimate incorporation into the family of nations is long overdue. How can we neglect or deny 23 billion people who have been contributing so much to developing countries in every sector of their economy? How can we deny them entrance into the organs of the United Nations? It is unfair and unjust and should be remedied.

The President took the Chair.

The travails of the people of Palestine arising from the illegal occupation of their lands continue to haunt us globally. The General Assembly has repeatedly pronounced in favour of the rights of the Palestinian people, but the illegal occupiers, backed internationally by a handful of powerful States, have continued to thwart the will of the international community. Peace in the Middle East will remain a mirage unless the national rights of the Palestinian people are recognized and upheld in practice.

As we speak in this Hall today, we seek to amplify the echoes of the visionaries of yesteryear who stood at this rostrum to give voice to the system of multilateral cooperation and mutual respect that has defined our post-war existence. New challenges may arise, but the solutions — diplomacy, ambitious action and respect for the sovereign equality of all Member States — are eternal. Multilateral diplomacy may be messy and imperfect; international law may be frustratingly inconsistent; the path of development may be beset on all sides by natural and man-made obstacles; but, united, we have always been greater than the sum of our individual parts, and together there is no challenge too great for the collective wisdom of our great nations and our great institution.

As new challenges confront us, let us hew ever closer to the undeniable strengths of our Organization to make this a better world for all of us.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Prak Sokhonn, Senior Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Sokhonn (Cambodia): On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and on my own behalf, I congratulate you, Mr. Lajčák, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji, for his commitment and dedication to the work of the previous session.

I join previous speakers in expressing my deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims of the earthquake in Mexico and their families.

My delegation finds the theme of this session of the General Assembly extremely relevant. It appropriately sums up the six overarching priorities of the presidency, which respond to the global megatrends currently facing our world. The interaction between population growth, massive migration movement, climate change and food insecurity renders these megatrends all the more worrisome.

Similarly, the same forces of globalization that in the past have made us so interdependent are exposing deep flaws in the existing international order. A quarter century after the end of the Cold War, the world has become, by many measures, more complex and challenging than ever before. Today, our world is increasingly multipolar, which creates chaos and turbulence as the competition between the major Powers becomes more confrontational. We are more interdependent but more unequal; we are more prosperous and yet millions are still afflicted with poverty. All these factors have contributed to a sense of a world out of balance, and that is the paradox that defines our world today.

While we share the deep concern about the situation on the Korean peninsula, we appeal to all the parties concerned to exercise the utmost restraint to avoid provocative activities and remain committed to peaceful and constructive dialogue so as to defuse tension and promote trust and confidence in the region.

Another factor destabilizing collective security is the unilateral and illegal embargo on Cuba. We ask that this violation of international law be brought to an end.

While it is true that globalization and technological progress have dramatically increased global trade and wealth all over the world, it is equally true that they have been factors in the increases we are seeing in inequality, social tensions and, sometimes, conflicts.

To a large extent, those fragilities are responsible for many of today's conflicts and threats.

One of those threats is terrorism, from which no country is spared. Defeating that transnational threat requires a firm global resolve to comprehensively address it in all its forms, starting with the symptoms and root causes of radicalization and confronting the issues of foreign fighters and financing for terrorism and other forms of support.

Let me touch on two topics of relevance — the theme of this session of the General Assembly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and climate change.

The 2030 Agenda is inextricably linked to many of the issues that perturb the world today, the most pressing being climate change, which is not only a direct threat in itself but is also a multiplier of many other threats — from poverty, diseases and food insecurity to mass migrations and regional conflicts. In our view, climate change is a global human security issue that presents a serious and unprecedented threat to global peace and security more generally.

Cambodia is regularly ranked among the top 10 most vulnerable countries globally, with extreme weather events damaging our infrastructure, severely affecting agriculture, disrupting economic activities and hampering crucial social services for our vulnerable groups. While our contribution to climate change is negligible and our domestic resources quite limited, we have nonetheless made clear commitments to low-carbon development and look forward to developing partnerships with other progressive nations that are committed to addressing this formidable challenge cooperatively and fairly. I am pleased to note that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change acknowledges the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, meaning that they are based on countries' respective capabilities and varying national conditions. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda is our boldest agenda for humankind and it is aimed at fostering fair globalization.

Cambodia has demonstrated its commitment to sustainable development over the past two decades. Specifically, our target of reducing the poverty rate to 19.5 per cent by 2015 was achieved ahead of schedule. We have received a United Nations award for halving hunger before the deadline. Cambodia is also among the top seven performers globally for its improvements in the *Human Development Index* between 1990 and 2015.

With regard to peace and security, Cambodia is proud of its unwavering commitment to United Nations peacekeeping efforts. More than two decades ago Cambodia received United Nations Blue Berets deployed on their peacekeeping mission. Since 2006, we have dispatched more than 4,700 troops to take part with great and commendable success in United Nations peacekeeping missions in a number of hotspots in the world, such as the Sudan, South Sudan, Lebanon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Syria and Mali.

As all delegations know, peacekeeping operations are not without security risks. Peacekeepers continue to come under attack from armed groups and increasingly from terrorists. In May, rebel ambushes in the Central African Republic killed and wounded our Cambodian peacekeepers. Let us pay tribute to those who have died while serving under the United Nations flag and remind ourselves to acknowledge their contributions in the transformation of many countries from battlefields to peaceful States.

(*spoke in French*)

I now wish to address the issues of human rights and democracy, since my country is regularly targeted in that regard by some countries and United Nations agencies, as well as by international non-governmental organizations active in these areas.

Cambodia upholds the universal principle that we all possess fundamental human rights. We therefore see no incompatibility between national sovereignty, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and international monitoring of the application of those rights, provided that it is impartial and takes all pertinent factors on the ground into account, and that observers harbour no prejudice or prejudgement against democratically elected authorities.

Now, what is the reality? To get straight to the point, assessments of human rights situations vary according to the political predispositions of certain great Powers. The same reasoning holds true for some big international non-governmental organizations whose agendas are far from politically neutral. The issue of human rights and democracy comes up only when the specific interests of certain major Powers are at stake, depending on the vagaries of the moment. Otherwise, all we hear is total and often complicit silence.

My country suffered from the deliberate political instrumentalization of human rights and democracy for

more than 12 years, during which time the international community denied the existence of the most terrible mass crimes. Today, as a survivor of the genocidal Pol Pot regime, I am pained and shocked to hear the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia refer to the crimes perpetrated by that regime as mere disturbances. We are subject to incessant criticism on matters that are reported in a partial and biased manner. Those reports always blame the Government and portray the opposition as martyrs of democracy and human rights. They invariably and exclusively target the Government, while the wrongdoings and illegal behaviour of the opposition are never or rarely mentioned.

What country represented in the General Assembly would refrain from acting when opposition politicians incite people to remove border posts, ignite vile hysteria with racist remarks and publish false treaties and fake maps to make people believe that some parts of the country have been annexed by neighbouring States? What country endorses defamation and slander? In most countries, incitements to racial hatred, xenophobic statements and speeches of the extreme right are severely denounced or even condemned, as we have just seen with the events of Charlottesville. While such actions are the daily language of the Cambodian opposition, they have never been condemned or raised by non-governmental organizations or the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia.

The latest attacks on the Royal Government of Cambodia pertain to the expulsion of an institute affiliated with a foreign political party that, under the cover of democracy training, deliberately supports the opposition and violates our law; the closure of a tax delinquent foreign newspaper; and the arrest of an opposition leader who, in a recorded interview, confessed to being an agent of a major Power working to overthrow the Government. In what country would such behaviour by a foreign Government be tolerated? We have not acted arbitrarily but rather completely in accord with provisions of our specific laws.

We can learn an important lesson from the history of my country. When we were forced to choose a path set by some Western Powers, Cambodia ended up suffering one of the most horrific human tragedies of the last century. We must recognize that it was the Cambodian Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen and with its own homegrown methods, that secured peace for the country in 1998. It was a striking demonstration of the fact that certain practices imposed from the outside are often part of the problem rather than the solution.

Today we are accused of undermining democracy because, under existing laws, we are prosecuting and punishing people who violate the law. Those who criticize or even threaten us refuse to take into consideration the crimes committed by those whom they protect.

While acknowledging with sincere gratitude the very positive and important contributions of many countries to peace and economic development in our country, I would like to conclude by affirming that the discourse of certain Governments concerning human rights and democracy will be relevant and credible only when those countries first apply to themselves the same standards of treatment that they apply to their assessments, criticisms and condemnations of others.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.